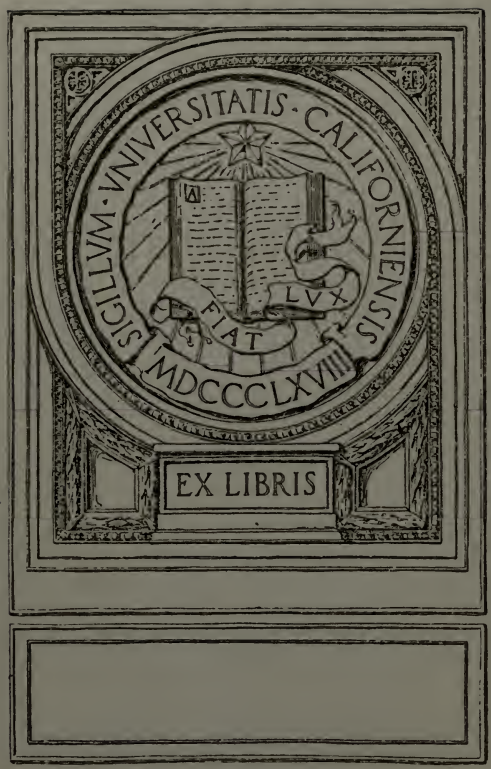
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THE LONDON SPY

A BOOK OF TOWN TRAVELS

BY

THOMAS BURKE

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In the Thick of It

I HOPE the title of this book will not mislead you.

I have no shocking revelations with which to humour you; no exclusive dinner-table confessions to disclose; only a few little pictures of the streets to offer you; pictures snapped as we wander among quiet courts or jostle the thickest crowd in the Strand, or cheer the broken-down car in Oxford Street, or encourage trapeze artists repairing telephone wires, or, on the Embankment, watch the barges go by. . . . That sort of spying.

Of all our poets who have attempted in one way or another to celebrate London in song, none of the illustrious hundreds, from William Dunbar onward, has, I think, got so near to the heart of the matter as that obscure lyrist, who sang discordantly, some fifteen years ago, to the mouth-organ rather than the lyre. How does the doggerel go?

> Let's all go down the Strand!
> ('Ave a banana!)
> Let's all go down the Strand!
> I'll be leader, you can march behind,
> Come with me and see what we can find . . .

The very London, I think. Not the complete London; only a tiny facet of a many-sided

stone; but large enough to throw up a flash that signals London to the remote corners of the world, as Tipperary once signalled England. The Strand is by no means the gayest street in London. To-day, it is rather businesslike. There is none of the caddish larking of years ago. It is no longer the playground of rich scallywags from the Army and the Universities. But its business is the business of pleasure, and its fund of delight shows no sign of weakening. What it wants in sparkle is supplied by exuberance, and the banana belongs to it. The banana, a somewhat solemn fruit, was made, by this song, one of that facetious company of tripe, cheese, kippers, lodgers, and the clown's string of sausages: a symbol of Cockaigne.

And that's what I've been after—the London banana, in its haunts and its humours.

For every Cockney the City has a personal and secret significance. Each of us sees it from a different angle. In each of us it evokes differing emotions, intimate and unutterable moods. But I think Everyman's London holds moving crowds, lights glaring or glittering or glowing, profuse shop-windows, street-markets, dim alleys, long roads of dark houses running to mysterious ends, the Strand, Piccadilly Circus, and the banana. For we have all, once at least, been down the Strand in what I may call the banana mood. We have each, at some time, made one of nineteen jolly good boys. The hi-tiddley-hi-ti spirit has a knack of seizing you without warning in London, when the shops are open, and the boys and the girls are out, and

the buses glide and impetuous taxis dart and double, and there's a " something " in the air—a taste of Spring or the bite of frost. Then the joy of the streets comes upon you, and you are in tune with the crowd. You don't care if it snows. You're ready to change hats with anybody.

This mood gives no warning of its approach. It may come upon you before lunch as hotly as after dinner. It may attack you in Grosvenor Square as successfully as in the Strand ; in Stratford Broadway or Cromwell Road ; in Soho or Wigmore Street. Let there be three of you, good wanderers or loungers, and a fine evening (if you are young, a wet evening will not extinguish your squibs and crackers), and the spirit of the banana will get you if you don't watch out. For joy of London is no matter of liberties or restrictions, of lights and drinks and suppers and late hours. It is within you and the streets, always ; and my London mornings and afternoons are as crowded with happy hazards as Piccadilly Circus at seven o'clock in the evening. Although the authorities treat the citizens of London as the authorities of Oxford treat the schoolboys under their charge, they can't confiscate *my* tuck-box of London Delight. They wouldn't know where to look for it.

London's banana is always waiting to be eaten. At all hours I may enjoy curious encounters, the urge of the multitude, the glow and rustle of girls ; glamorous mornings and deep-sounding darknesses. The delicate shade

and shimmer of Green Park at eleven in the morning, the deep-lunged midday laughter of Charing Cross, the turbulent lights of the Strand at dusk—in each of these is essence of London—free to all.

Let us go out then, and mix with the harsh splendours of the day and the grace of the city's midnight. Monk and I will be leaders, and you can march behind.

. . . . . .

Meet Mr. Monk. . . .

He is the perfect town companion. He has the right London spirit. He is ready to go "tatts" at any time, anywhere. He doesn't ask what the occasion is, or where we are going *now:* he is content to go. Plan or programme he detests. Never need you ask him what he would like to do. He is game for anything, and never is he heavy in the hand. He will exchange hats in Sloane Street or philosophise in Newington Butts. He will lunch you at Prince's or join you at a Good Pull-Up For Carmen. He loves to idle in out-of-the-way corners, wherever his feet may carry him; holding, as all right-thinking people hold, that leisure is the true life, and that Britons never were made to be slaves of the vice of work. He is as happy and playful in Old Ford as in Cambridge Circus; at Pentonville Road as at Charing Cross or The Mall. For him, "being out" among men is sufficient holiday; he asks no dressing or added grace; and being out with him, though he is by many years my senior, is like being out with a wide-eyed nephew, avid of excitement. To

all the common incidents and spectacles of the London day he brings an appetite. He makes bright commerce with the multitude. Shops and advertisement hoardings, queer characters and the amiable eccentricities of the plain man excite and enchant him. His immediate radius is illumined by large laughter, and his company floats like an island of felicity through the beating sea of the preoccupied crowd.

As a playfellow of the pavements he is without blemish, if I except his enthusiasm for the novels of Edgar Saltus. There I cannot meet him, for I have never read Edgar Saltus. Often have he and I paced twenty streeted miles of London, moving here and there as the mood led us, caring not a monkey's caress where the hours found us or which way the wind blew, but, possessed by London, wandering, gossiping, or holding good silences.

Such a day was yesterday. We did nothing worth remarking. We had, as they say, nothing to show for it, and I can make no claims for it. But here follows the idle record of that idle day for your pain or pleasure:

We left home at ten o'clock, the respectable hour, and proceeded leisurely to town. For these morning hours the avenues of work best suit the mood, for there is no more stimulating and gratulatory pastime than that of standing in that sterile region east of St. Paul's and west of Aldgate Pump, watching men with ten times our income moving actively hither and thither in zealous busy-ness. They rush or plod, with furrowed brow, preoccupied, while we, whose

joint incomes would barely pay the income tax of one of them, may be excused some feeling of relish in indulging our fancy and turning this way or that, wherever a corner invites to a dog fight, a horse down, or a Punch and Judy show.

For we also were once of the City, junior clerks, and, had we stayed there, might now be like one of these, in a position of command, with a swollen salary and a circumscribed leisure, a cave-dweller, working and eating below the earth's surface. We might have followed the example of those well-groomed young clerks in the advertisement pictures, who take " courses " in business proficiency and mind-training, and are summoned, six weeks after their first lesson, to the Board Room (chilly words !) and given the secretaryship of the company. We might now be bobbing in and out of the City every day like a bally shuttle—Surrey-City, City-Surrey, Surrey-City. As it is, we buy our bananas where we will, and choose the most ripe, far beyond the Surrey-City sector ; and, while the good hard-working citizens disappear into doorways and go upstairs or below to their offices, and earn their country cottages and their motor cars and cigars, we turn from Cheapside into Newgate Street, and so to Holborn, and Kingsway and the Strand.

Wet day or fine, Spring or Winter, in the candid sunlight or the pensive rain, the morning streets of London carry always full measure of pleasing aspects. There is the crowd and there are shop windows. There are Mr. Gamage's

windows, with their marvellous riot of mechanical contraptions that draws you from the other side of the street. There is Leather Lane with its cheap-jack stalls. There is Staple Inn, offering moments of contemplation, and Mr. Glaisher's "remainder" bookshop. There is the great bald-faced boulevard of Kingsway. There is the full-charactered music of the Strand; and minute by minute the sweet spell of sky and mist dressing crude buildings with grace, and the proud procession of traffic.

Though I best love London in Autumn and Midwinter, she wears her peculiar beauty in the Spring; and I find that season as generous to her as to the fields and lanes that await its coming for release from Winter's bondage. To each it lends fresh beauty. To the woods and lanes, while the first green is barely upon them, comes the swallow, marking the blank sky with wayward curves and angles. The hills show green and blue, with here and there a vivid acre of gold. About the lanes the hawthorn leans, and the giant beeches transmute the light to their own unearthly beauty. Cottage doors are newly opened to the air, and the good gossips come out to the porches and talk of the prospect of the fruit crops. In every garden the boughs of cherry and pear are putting forth bright shoots against the flecked blue of the sky, and winged creatures are busy in their lazy way about the hedgerow. It is the time of *Germinal;* and green, the colour of awakening, has conquered the brown of Winter-time decay. Deep in the woods primrose and anemone are

chiming their blue and gold with the hue of last year's leaves, and about the paths at twilight one encounters youth, solitary or in couples. And, while the lovers love, the solitaries muse on fragments of Herrick or Spenser or Campion, or snatches of *Pervigilium Veneris*, if they are so fortunate as to hold within their minds those fragile echoes of springtides past. On the upper reaches of the Thames the waters sparkle with a new brilliance. The house-boats are under the decorators, and in the high woods above the river the birds make separate music and communal colour. The lusty pomp begins.

Year by year this miracle is repeated, yet still it moves all men to wonder and revival. They do not accept it, as they accept Winter. They marvel anew, and, at the first bland breeze, would, if they were free, be off and away on the roads, not to ride, but to tramp, to saunter, to make casual encounters at roadside taverns, and to make the night's resting-place where the night finds them.

But for my own part I prefer to meet this miracle in London. I know not where the white road runs, and I'm beggared if I care. I like to let London, transmuted by the random touch of Spring, stir my blood with her new vistas and new aspects. For London, too, is sensible to this spirit of unrest, and turns in its winterly apparel, and listens. The Spring comes more slowly upon us, perhaps, than upon the countryside. We do not suddenly get the first smell of something new in the air, and follow its delicate trail; but day by day I be-

come aware of an increasing mildness in the air and of a new spirit in the streets, and I begin to debate whether I shall leave my overcoat at home.

And then, one morning, my business or my whims takes me through the squares or the parks, and look! —the trees are alight with buds and busy with birds; and something steals upon me and settles lightly within me, and I become silly and hungry for colour and song; and London feeds me there and then with a revelation of Springtide, and the very traffic is attuned to my vagrant mood.

My eyes are opened. My heart sings *Voi che sapete*. . . .

I note that the girls have packed away their furs and come out in frivolous window-curtains. I see that the painters and upholsterers are busy in hotels and on shop-fronts; that Spring suitings are filling the tailors' shops, and that the early sunshine is conspiring with them by betraying the rubbed places of my Dennis Bradleys. Gardeners are busy in the parks and public gardens, bedding out (I think that's what they call it), and all the youth of England is on fire, plying the makers of athletic goods with copious orders. The bus conductor says assertively that we shall soon 'ave Easter 'ere, and old ladies remark to each other, with naive surprise, how the evenings are drawing out, dear. In suburban railway trains, dusty talk of hard times and political knavery is shelved, and bright hopes are expressed for "my early peas," "my Lady Gays," and "my crocuses."

Sage advice is offered and taken on pruning, slugs, manure and grass ; and eyes shine with the old mild frenzy of the earth. Adam's hobby is the topic ; seed catalogues are the things that matter ; relieved, if at all, by conjectures as to the achievements of Kent, Surrey and Middlesex.

Then I recognise that the Spring has been with us these two weeks, and I throw up my office window, and the voice of London pours clearly upon my ear with the shock of remembered song. I have heard it through the Winter as a muffled throbbing, but now the muff is removed, and we are in close contact. My nose receives the sad odour of asphalt and petrol, and my ears distinguish the instrumentation of the town—the buzz of the taxis, the hum of the buses, and the rumble of horse-traffic, and I recognise that London has other birds than sparrows. The truant has returned.

Lord's and the Oval make signs and promises. The sharrabangs devise new routes and extend the old. Out come the tennis racquet and last year's flannels for anxious inspection. The People of Importance (who have never been missed) advise the *Morning Post* of their return from the Mediterranean. Taxi drivers and bus drivers coquet with courtesy, under the influence of water-colour skies and temperate air. Tops and skipping-ropes break out among the children ; the Italianate ice-cream barrows appear, and the greengrocers' shops assume fresh complexions. English violets and primroses appear at the kerbside, and everywhere, in the

poorest alley as in the noble thoroughfare, in Duckett Street, Stepney, as in Bond Street, there's a something about that sets the good folk chirping.

Old Pugnutt, of Hoxton, is giving all spare hours to his three square yards of front and six square yards of back garden, fixing and transplanting, making his windows gay with newly painted window-boxes and pots of flowering plants. They won't live. Hoxton air will see to that, and Pugnutt knows it. Why, then, does he do it? Why make this forlorn enterprise at beautifying Hoxton? Because it's Springtime; even his poor veins are filled with genial fire, and "something" makes him do it. Here, as in the country, doors are set open to the ardent air, and Mrs. Pugnutt goes into her "cleaning," not perfunctorily, as in Winter, but with something of a passion; and, as the rooms are cleaned, so something of dustiness falls from her heart. She and her neighbours no longer hurry past each other, their arms pinched in under their thin shawls, their noses eager for the kitchen fire. They dally at the corner, and under the candid eyes of their playmate, the Spring, they smile kindly upon old enemies.

"What a *lovely* day, to be sure, Mrs. Pugnutt!"

"Ah, quite bucks you up to feel the sun, don't it? Things don't seem 'alf so bad in the Spring, do they?"

So they renew their serviceable philosophy and their old wonder at the warmth and brightness of the sun, and debate in new terms the hardness of the times, and part cheerfully, what-

ever the occasion, thanking God that they've got a nice fine day for it.

The day, and the day's work go swiftly, and we no longer dash home by Tube, but try for the top of the bus ; or, if we live not too far afield, we walk home with Angeline through the chill light of the evening.

These Spring twilights have not the intimate warm serenity of the first Autumn twilights ; rather, they are aloof, perturbing. Nature is in labour, and the lyric light of the day is settled into something strained. Nowhere, I think, not even in a desert of snow, does one suffer the sense of desolation so acutely as on a March evening in a side-street, with a lone bird piping to the clouded sky. Life seems colder than a January dawn, sadder than that plain where Childe Roland journeyed. The pulse of things is then at its lowest beat, for it is the long moment of the earth's agony before the sudden rise, the new birth. Yet, though melancholy more profound than the melancholy of Autumn be about us, we are not dismayed : we know its meaning. We know that in the morning we shall have flowers and kind air and frolic skies ; and with Angeline we discuss field-path rambles and Saturday and Sunday walks round the more pastoral Home Counties.

Under the smart sunshine every little lost corner awakes and chirps. Even the morose alleys of the City—Wallbrook, Bucklersbury, Budge Row, Lothbury—shed a little of their dinge and misanthropy, and seek harmony with humanity. The river, from Chelsea to Wool-

wich, throws back the fresh light in the morning, and never is it so lovely as on a night of Spring under the moon. In the parks and on the commons, from Finchley to Wimbledon, from Barking to Ealing, youth is "out to play," and they go to their games like prisoners from cells. A vast increment of energy surges through the city and through its people. Our laughing Lady Greensleeves has kissed them.

It soon dies down, this sudden burst, and by June, when the hot days begin, there is a perceptible languor in the streets, and men talk of their holidays. But while it lasts it is magnificent. It is a city in full holiday. We are all appetites, and the Spring gives zest to all our doings. We let business stay, and we drink with gusto, not to quench thirst or to warm or to cool ourselves, but for joy of the Spring. We sing old songs, and we make new songs, and London joins in the chorus. Even a bus-ride becomes a holiday event—not organised and decked with White City flam-jams, but an impromptu carnival of Spring-worship; deep, rich, fluent and compelling. The fountains in Trafalgar Square seem charged with effervescence, and break the morning light into a million drops of sunshine. We no longer go about our business with set faces. We are awake. We look about us and upward. After long crouching over Winter fires, we straighten our shoulders gladly. We begin to dawdle, and the windows of Mr. Thomas Cook and of the railway offices are set out with allurements that give excuse for dawdling.

The pale office-boy ("Sidney's holidays are in September"—Miss Vesta Tilley) looks longingly upon them, and lags in his errand; September is half a year away, and already he feels the pull. For him and for me, the exhortation "Spend Easter in the Tyrol!" is but a gibe, an aggravation of our vernal unrest. The best that we shall achieve will be a Bank Holiday at Southend or the South Coast; but I warrant that even that brief pilgrimage will render him and me a measure of travel-ecstasy denied to those whose circumstances make them always free of Homburg, Norway or the Rhine. We shall carry the Spring under our waistcoats.

But, if I cannot go to the clime where the Spring is born, there are many little corners of London where I can touch hands with it. In the Winter, I am for the dark warmth of the Slavonic quarters—Aldgate, Stepney, Spitalfields, St. Luke's—where Winter has a native cousinship; but in the Spring I am called to the nonchalant skies of our Latin quarters—Soho, Charlotte Street, and Clerkenwell. It is to Clerkenwell and its lazy laughter that I am first called at the earliest taste of soft weather, and thither I make pilgrimage, to greet old friends. I lounge down Eyre Street Hill, catching an aromatic whiff from the hot bright by-ways of Genoa, and humming *L'Addio a Napoli;* and at my keyless humming out swings, from his store, Vincento or Alessandro, and I am bidden enter, and a cork is drawn, and we drink a brisk bottle to La Primavera. And Alessandro takes down his guitar and sings some lucid melody of old Naples.

After an hour in Italy, I take an hour in France, in Frith Street, and take my lunch in Charlotte Street, with its Austrian-Swiss atmosphere, its little white cafés and coffee-bar, and its flasks of rude but jocund Chianti, which is very Spring—sharp, rough, but tinct with sunshine. The season demands these things. Steaks from the grill, cuts from the joint, and tankards of beer are an offence to the occasion ; the coming of Spring presumes more gracious observance. One must greet the visitor with the customs of the visitor's country, with a little bunch of violets for courtesy, and wine for celebration, and songs under the moon of April.

Strangely moving are those Spring moonlights. During the day, the Spring is in your blood. It is expressive ; visible and vocal. But under the young moon it creeps to your soul and makes sanctuary there, and cleanses you and blesses you. The moon of Winter has its austerity, the moon of Autumn its opulence, the moon of Summer its glory ; but this moon of the child-season—one is hushed and humbled before it as before young virginity. In field or on hill-top, in street or alley or square, the moon of Spring makes the night mad with secret raptures. You may stand in Pimlico under that moonlight, and be shaken out of yourself, and come chastened from its delicate hauntings. You may get an echo of its mysteries in Cheapside, and draw refreshment from it on the Embankment.

For Spring is the true beginning of the New Year. Then, not in January, do we, old and

young, look back and forward, and remember and resolve. It is then that we desire to go apart and seek self-communion; for this season of the purification of Nature is the season of the purification of man, the season of avowal and renewal.

" Now love ye to-night who loved never; now ye, who have loved, love anew ! "

. . . . . .

But I indulge too much my habit of wandering. Where were we ?

Oh yes, in Kingsway, going towards the Strand. In the Strand, we had an encounter, Monk and I ; one that indicated a morning draught. We took it at Rule's, a place that has blossomed into a " second period," and become a " place," where the merry old third-rate actors meet under the guardianship of Mr. Tom Bell. They are the last of the old guard, for the younger school of actors wears now the respectability of Golder's Green. The established men and the ambitious young don't lounge. They are not to be seen in crowded places. They live the quiet life of the bank manager or the merchant. But in Rule's, the old style is met at midday, or after the show ; comedians erect, with bent elbow and back-thrown head, Shakespearians leaning on the bar. Each harks back to the speech of an earlier time, and my-dear-old-boy's the new-comer, apparently overjoyed at meeting again. Each persistently begs the other to have it with him : " It's *my* turn, dear old thing ! " And always they act ; always they talk to their neighbour as

though he were at the back of the house, articulating each syllable and opening each sentence with "Dear-old-chap-let-me-tell-you-this . . ." so that one fears to listen lest some secret of high import, better unspoken, be about to leave their lips.

They have cascades of talk, but no conversation. Before one man can finish a sentence, the other is off on a new theme. While one is in the middle of a funny story, you may see the other's lips twitching to tell a better one. Always they complain about the times and always they are friendly to all comers; and each congratulates the other on his work, dear old boy! And truly they are dear old boys. I have heard Stock Exchange men and others in the City use the term, but there it is false in spirit and application; a mere skeleton without flesh or soul. But these are a happy band of brothers, who make of Rule's a large-spirited and democratic club.

When Mrs. O'Brien (Carrie Julian) left its doors it fell away and ceased to be known as a "place"; but, after its decline in the war-years, it has picked up; and now, while it is not a place to which a man should (or would) take his wife, it is what a bar ought to be—a place where men are honestly themselves in their natural state, free from the imposed niceties of speech and intercourse.

I know no reason why women should not take a glass of wine in a bar as they take their coffee after shopping, but they should have their own bars. The mixed bar is an anomaly, and

neither men nor women are comfortable in them. There should be dainty taverns, owned and conducted by women for women. As the man, lonely and seeking company, may, in any part of London, find conversation over a drink, and sometimes meet quaint or brilliant character, so should the lonely woman be able to freshen her mind with talk with other women. There is no conversation so racy as that held with strangers on the common ground of a tavern. It is always amusing and often surprising ; and those who love to explore other minds, and discover curious points of view, may have excellent and rich talks with unknowns in bars. The clerk, the shopkeeper, the taxi-driver, the merchant, will illuminate for you positions and attitudes and forms of conduct that may long have been mysteries to you, dark spots in the inwardness of the Englishman.

And I have never understood why women should not be, among themselves, free of this casual intercourse and acquaintanceship. Many lonely men have found friends who were first met in these public places, which offer illimitable fields of human companionship ; and acquaintance grew, from occasional meetings and talks, into close knowledge and understanding and friendship. Too often our friends grow upon us and with us from school and business and family ; we have not each sought the other out. But, with these lonely ones, they met, surveyed, and, as the phrase goes, " took to each other." Outside the tavern they would never have met, wanting a common ground ; and

they would have missed much goodly communion. How the lonely woman ever finds friends or acquaintances, I know not. Everybody feels that somewhere exists the ideal friend; but, if you are limited to your home circle or your office set, how to find the friend? Well, men find theirs by ranging hither and thither, and picking and choosing sympathetic spirits; and I would like to see the lonely woman free to enjoy similar opportunities. The tea-shop affords no such opportunity. You dare not speak to your neighbour in those places; if you do, you are met at once with a suspicious eye and a grunt or a monosyllable. You are checkmated at first move.

That attitude is frowned upon at Rule's and all such good places. When we entered we were at once recognised by a man, who drew us into a goodly circle of four. The bar was crowded with choice fellows and merry comedians, who, by grace of tavern atmosphere, are much funnier there than they are allowed to be on the London stage. Unhappily, much of that fun may not be transferred to the printed page. There were stories . . . and stories. . . .

We gathered half a dozen of the best; then moved westward from the gasconade of Maiden Lane to the sparkle of the Square, and lunched at the Ivy, where are perfect cooking and that excelling service that conceals itself. I am often asked by young country friends which is the best restaurant in London, and I can never answer them. There is no best restaurant in London, and there is no best church in London.

In so intimate a matter as religion or food there can be no standard of perfection. Each man has his own best. My choice is always the Ivy, opposite the Ambassador's Theatre. There you have elegant appointments, a masterly chef, and a noble cellar.

I have no interest in the Ivy, and I am not getting paid for this. Far from it. Even when I can afford to lunch or dine there (and I seldom can) I miss the welcome that was mine when it was in its beginning days. Only the very regular or the very expensive customer gets that now. Instead of being ushered to the old corner-table on the ground floor, by the window, I am sent upstairs. You see, the Ivy is now successful and famous, and I do it no credit. When it first opened, under the original ownership, it was only one room with a bare floor and a few mural decorations, and you could dine there for two shillings. Now it has acquired the whole corner block, and wears oak panelling, thick carpets, and shaded lights for each table. Formerly, it was the haunt of hard-up gentlemen of the theatre; now it is crowded with plutocratic "stars" and the smart people who affect that company. In its new and elaborate raiment, it looks with slightly raised eyebrows at my three-year-old suit. I don't fit. Still, when I am asked out to lunch and asked to name my restaurant, I always name the Ivy.

We dallied with coffee and watched the new arrivals. A pleasant pastime, this. Taking meals out is not yet an instinctive habit with the English. Popular in the seventeenth and eigh-

teenth centuries, it fell into disuse in the nineteenth, and it is still much of a function. Manners and manner for the restaurant and the home differ sharply. The Englishman does not walk into a restaurant as into his own dining-room. He "enters" as to a stage. It is a self-conscious parade, and natural grace becomes deliberate gracefulness. The Englishman —bless him for it—always blinks at the limelight. He is conscious of making one at a public occasion. He looks about him with a cold glassy stare. Seldom does he appear at home. He seems to miss the conveniences of his own table, and its ever-present attendance ; and the covert eye-shots at the waiter, who is always somewhere else, weary him.

After coffee we wandered again. We thought of a matinée, and thought better of it. There was no concert that attracted us, so we parted for awhile—Monk to do a little work, I to the august quiet of the London Library. A wonderful institution, the London Library ; and it and St. James's Square are in happy accord ; their moods blend. It gives me the use of the second-best library in London, and the very best reading and writing room ; it permits me to borrow ten volumes at a time and keep them for three months, if I wish ; and all for a yearly charge of three guineas. There is no other library in England that affords such facilities to its subscribers at so low a rate. One salutes Carlyle every time one enters its doors.

We met again later, in those suave hours

between tea and dinner when London is tuning-up for the evening surge of song, and the feminine twilight gleams in primrose and grey, and the piquant odour of tea and toast pours from the tea-shops with compelling advertisement of the delights of five o'clock. Full of wonder were the streets, cluttered with the going-home crowd, lit by lamp and shop, magical with movement, and calling us with deluding distances and starry miles. The shops were open, and their treasures lay before us, newly guised by the lustre of concealed lamps. Regent Street glowed flamboyantly against the night, each of its butterfly shops a jazz of colour, a *vers libre* of publicity; while Piccadilly Circus was a transformation "set," a riot of colour and dazzle and blaze.

This bravura would not suit all parts of London. There are women who are decorated by jewels, and women who beautify the jewels, and women who do neither. They sit well upon Piccadilly Circus, lending beauty and receiving dignity, but the homely beauty of the East End is not of the kind that is emphasized by the lustre of gems. The hushed semitones of dim streets, of silken twilights interrupted by suave lamplight—these require no bedizenment. But to Piccadilly Circus the jewels belong, and she wears them splendidly. I pass through it every night, yet never can I pass without an applauding thrill and that catch of the breath which marks our recognition of good dramatic work.

Away they go, these movies in light: motor-

cars in motion, liquor flowing from bottles, flags flying, and messages calling to you across the face of the night to Eat This or Drink That or Keep That Schoolgirl Complexion. Blue and green and red and yellow and amber, flowing and flashing, they spell their foolish fables into the night and into my eye and brain, and vex and dazzle and delight me. Your Londoner is always a child, loving "sights" and spectacles, and our advertising experts have gauged him well, in this matter. It behoves Mr. Brock, of the Crystal Palace, to look to it. Every night we have six or seven displays, each of which is as exciting as the fireworks; and none of them to the benefit of Mr. Brock. Piccadilly Circus has the best show, but that at Leicester Square runs it close; while Cambridge Circus, the Embankment and Oxford Street all array themselves in an evening dress of spangle and gem that bring them into competition with Broadway at night. I hope Broadway knows about it, and is pulling up its socks.

Around Soho we wandered, meeting friends released from toil, and lingering at odd corners, until our party became four, and we took a tray and a tankard at Snow's, the cheapest decent dining-place in the West End.

All types and characters dine at Snow's—rising actors, rising or decaying journalists, taxi-drivers, ladies of the chorus, clerks, film workers, wanderers like ourselves, and those nondescript solitaries who are too shabby and diffident to be anybody, and too distinguished

of brow to be nobody. Snow's is arranged on the old pew-system, and there are no table-cloths. Your dishes, your bread and your drink are brought to you on your own little tray, and for something less than two shillings you may feed splendidly there on plain English food, in a pleasant homely atmosphere, and may read all the papers. A good place to know. Now that "The Sceptre," with its age-long tradition, is closed, Snow's and Stone's are the only chop-houses left in the West ; and of the two I prefer Snow's. The company is more interesting and diversified and less prosperous than the company of Stone's, which is mainly lawyers and Civil Servants.

It occurs to me that there is a fresh field for the restaurateur in London. In odd corners of London you will find cafés for all nations—French, Swiss, Italian, German, Spanish, Greek, Chinese, Japanese, Hungarian, Russian, Serbian, Norwegian, Armenian, Albanian, Czecho-Slovakian, and Welsh. But—there are no restaurants for the provincials. Why not ? I am sure that the visitor from the remote shires, bewildered by the choice of restaurants, or weary of cosmopolitan cuisine, would turn with delight to a café where he might get the food of his county and hear the accent of his lanes. There should be a Yorkshire restaurant, a Lancashire restaurant, a Devonshire restaurant, a Cornish restaurant, a Norfolk restaurant, offering pasties, junkets, pies, hot-pots, Bakewell puddings, dumplings. Not only would they attract their own wanderers and

the "Society of So-and-so Men in London," but the curious Londoner, who is always searching for new table thrills, would gladly renew acquaintance with dishes tasted on rare holidays. I'm sure there's money in it, and I present the idea to any enterprising woman anxious to start in business.

To the streets again. A theatre? A music-hall? The Holborn, the Euston? Not to-night. We were in the mood for less formal entertainment; and I knew that about the streets we would find bands and organs and coffee bars and other bars, and immediately outside the theatres good fun for which there is no charge. Walking up Shaftesbury Avenue, we were entertained by contortionists; the gentleman with soup spoons who makes merry music with them against his poor knees and elbows, itinerant gramophones, vocalists, elocutionists, real kilted Scots with bagpipes (from Aldgate) and small boys with their attempted songs and their abrupt breakdown at the warning cry of "Caw-pur!" Why go inside? More healthy and more refreshing to-night to eat your banana or your toffee-apple down our alley.

There are other nights, though, when the theatre calls insistently. It is a form of recreation and stimulation of which one never tires. The phrase "going to the theatre" still glitters and tinkles, as it glittered and tinkled to the eyes and ears of youth; and, though I sit now in a comfortable seat, I can still respond to the delicacies of the acting of to-day, as, in the old gallery days, I wept to

Martin Harvey, shivered to Herbert Tree or H. B. Irving, beat my fists and drew in my breath to the marvellous debonair gallantry of Fred Terry, and caught some random revelation of an outside world of glory from the ringing ardours of Lewis Waller and the austere melancholy of Forbes Robertson. We are quieter and finer to-day ; the theatre grows up as we grow up ; but I am as largely moved and exalted by our present artists as by those more flamboyant personalities ; though perhaps it were wiser not to mention names : I enjoy so many of them.

And they grow better and better day by day—not only our serious actors, but our lighter people, of whom my favourites are that volatile creature who shakes your midriff by constant movement, by doing, with magnificent exaggeration, the ordinary things that you do in your own home ; and that little fellow who draws your laughter by doing nothing but stand and look at you. The one is a delicious Elizabethan clown and tumbler ; the other a Dresden Shepherd. One's method is the method of the caricaturist ; the other's that of the miniaturist. His comic effects are conceived in little and carried out in the flimsiest material. He is all dainty touches, midget motions. Abandon and candour are alien to him. Everything he does is done pianissimo, and his normal mood is mignon—almost, may one say, so evanescent are his suggestions, mignonette. He is funny in the porcelain manner ; and his attitudes are as graceful as a Charles Conder painting on a fan ; only with him the fan is turned upside

down. The other, the clown, is funny in the cap-and-bells manner, presenting life in a series of "close-ups" through a distorted lens. But each, in his separate style, is a joy, and the theatre is the richer for them.

I have never attempted to analyse the extraordinary "pull" of the theatre, and I won't try it now. I only know that the outside of a theatre still attracts me with its adumbrations of glorious adventure, as it did in childhood. To-day, I know something of that strange region "behind," and still I must admit to a thrill when I am taken through the iron door. But in the early days the countries that lay behind the drop-scene were true enchanted countries, and I was led beautifully astray by the sorrows and distresses and high raptures of their people. They were not people of common clay. They were shadow-shapes of Otherwhere, whose adventures did not end with the drop of the curtain in the theatre but persisted through every hour of their lives. And, as I walked home, I would brood upon them, and give them adventures of my own fashioning, to make sweet and rich the sorry week's toil in dismal office. Shining creatures, moving outside the restraints and the dull negatives of our own world, ringed with the worship of thousands, their daily lives starred with the magnificent moments of a hundred legends of old love and loyalty. Many precious minutes have I snatched from the delivery of a message, to stand *outside* a theatre and gaze upon the portraits there exhibited, and catch some breath of their green-gardened lives.

It is a potent magnet, this display of beauty, to love-lorn office boys (you may see them at it to-day), and often have I journeyed from the City to the West End during the lunch-hour, or rather no-lunch-hour, to feed my heart upon radiant and exquisite girlhood. For three months I had a special theatre, the Garrick, and, Oh foolish! twice a day, at midday and after office hours, I would make my way to Charing Cross Road just to look at a certain photograph, and sometimes, if late enough, See Her Go In. Often, if I were out during the day, I would somehow make time to get a third look at it. Rapt and reverent I would stand before it, making my devotions to glowing and vibrant girlhood—a lonely, raw-fingered serf outside the gates of beauty and grace and order. To me that small photograph was a flake of Paradise against the dun humours of Charing Cross Road. The theatre was the palace of the true princess, and her name hung like the curve of the rainbow over my pallid world. She was a girl, not a woman. I somehow missed that phase of adolescence when the boy falls in love with the mature woman of the world. My precious was of my own age, and was famous as a child-actress. No—I shan't give you her name. She might see this and be distressed at learning what prodigal measure of adoration she had missed by not answering my letter. (Yes, I wrote to her—once; I even made songs for her and found out where she lived and delivered them myself at her wonderful house; but never a line, never a flick of the lily finger

to the worshipping page.) Anyway, since then she has grown up, and I have met her, not as serf before princess, but on the level, with only a suburban tea-table between us. Don't ask me if I was thrilled.

I achieved the reality and lost the dream. Many a night I wandered about Charing Cross Road, wondering hopelessly whether I should ever, at some green-leaved season, get to know her ; and when I did . . .

That is a troublesome question for wide-eyed young men—How can I get to know her ? I warrant you that at this and every moment it is agitating the minds of hundreds of young boys—girls, too—How to get to know the sweet unknown. We see, fleeting by in the street, the Perfect Girl. The trim figure, the bright face shine through the crowd for us, and at once we feel that we *must* know her. Soon, perhaps, she becomes familiar to sight by daily meeting in tram or bus or train, or passings at street-corners, or daily visits to the same tea-shop ; and the question persists — How can I get to know her ? A difficult business, for between you rises the mighty mountain of decorum.

Many men nurse regret for the things they have done, but many more nurse regret for missed chances, for the things they didn't do, and for the girls they might have known and never knew. We don't remember, poignantly, the girls we have known, but we all remember with a sigh the girls we didn't know. Maybe she lived in your very road, in the house opposite, or two doors away ; but neighbourhood

didn't help matters; rather, it set you farther away, for the eye of summary censure was upon you.

When, upon a time, I edited a boys' paper, I learned how wide-spread was this loneliness of youth, yearning towards the Nice Quiet Girl, seen in the tram or on the platform. Boys wrote to the Editor, describing their situation and their desire to make acquaintance with the One Girl. "How can I get to know her?" Well, the Editor couldn't answer them, for he had been in a similar fix, and had found no way out. The man of the world would brush the situation aside with one hand, but youth is timorous in these matters; awkward and fearful of blundering. I think I should have given a chapter to The Street of Checked Romances. I have had my share of them.

Each happened in the same way. For days you would pass or meet the girl, until you came to look for her, and it was an empty day if you missed her. And then came the thrill—That's the girl! That's the girl I want for a friend. That's the girl who would understand and help and encourage. She became for you the one girl in the world. Not knowing her, you endued her with all pleasing qualities: sensibility, shyness, the right gravity and the right humour, modesty, and a hatred of attitudes cheap or rude. But—how to get to know her. Between you heaved this mountain, or stretched that flaming sword, forbidding the stranger to blunder upon the nice girl with "Please I'd like to talk to you—may I?" You thought of the

crude dodges of the pinchbeck gallant—" 'Scuse me, miss, I think you dropped this ? " No—it wouldn't do. You dare not bruise her delicacy with a blundering intrusion of the Monkey Parade kind. She would put you down for one of That Sort. You decide, finally, that she wouldn't want to know a fellow like you, anyway, and no doubt she is engaged already : such charm and grace couldn't long go uncaptured. Certainly she would repulse any attempt at self-introduction. You wish you were one of those easy fellows that you read about in the magazine stories, who can do these things and carry them off with an air. . . .

You follow her to find out where she works, and at midday you find out which tea-shop she uses. You dare not go and sit at her table, but you get there early, and, when she does arrive, how deliciously you tremble as she hovers near your table. And what rapture if she sits opposite you. Subdued rapture, of course ; you dare not look straight at her ; but you pass the salt or the sugar, delighting in the service, and words tremble on your lips—airy phrases take form in your mind and vanish when formed—and you think of a thousand foolish ways of beating down that outstretched sword. Then you pause, stricken with the idea that she is not for ransom. You wait until she removes her gloves, and you flash an eye to the third finger of the left hand. Empty !

But it's no use. You go on day after day like this, and never achieve the introduction. While she—half her time she's thinking of that quiet,

dark boy, "I wish he'd speak. I believe he wants to."

You know she is the girl for you, and you languish, and nourish a vain passion, and read Byron. She is a Nice Girl; not like the girls in your own office—pert, self-assured, and full of fashions and theatre talk; but intelligent, serious. Undoubtedly serious—that is the main attraction to youth—not like your sisters or the other girls you know. Nothing flighty or Monkey's Parade-y or tennis-y about her, but a mind for finer things—not likely to giggle at a young man who reads poetry in his lunch hour.

And it's because she's a Nice Girl that you can't make that approach. With the other kind it would be easy; but you don't want the other kind. She is enclosed in a delicate but impenetrable armour of reserve. She gives her order in a quiet voice, and does not look about her.

Failing personal knowledge, you dream. You visualise her home, where she is the useful daughter and the jolly sister, and you conceive the bliss of an invitation to tea in that home one Sunday. You plan meetings, outside the office in the evening; dinners; theatres. You choose the restaurant and order the dinner, and make a dash at the wine-list; and She sits opposite, gently warmed with the rough wine (for which you have to go short next week) and makes you free of her mind; and always she is the girl that you have made her—serious and quietly gay.

There was one who always travelled to town

on the bus that I took, and always ate at the same restaurant. Sometimes we sat closely on the same seat outside, with the apron encoupling us ; but still she was as distant as the stars. And as adorable. Sweet agonies were those morning journeys, while one sat quietly and burned with desire to do splendid, bold or dreadful things in her presence ; anything to make oneself known, to compel her interest and wonder. In the tea-shop she used to read books, sometimes the book that I had just discovered. How I longed to talk to her about books. How I would sit opposite her, distended with longing to tell her that I had read that book, and what did she think of it ? I was sure she would like to know somebody who cared about books—she looked that kind of girl ; lonely, like myself, and without congenial comrades. But day by day she sat with head bowed over her cheap edition of Emerson or Shelley or Matthew Arnold, and never could I summon the pluck to speak and (no doubt) be snubbed.

I did make one effort. Once, when she was reading " Culture and Anarchy, " I brought up my copy of that book, and put it, challengingly, on the table, by the salt, thinking that she must see it and by some gesture or eyeshot betray interest, since we had shared that table for some weeks. But it didn't come off. The salt was out of her scheme that day ; she ordered coffee and pastries.

Then, one day, she was accompanied by a smart and attentive young man, and they smiled

intimately upon one another ; and that settled that.

There were many others—girls met on the way to work—girls in the train—girls living in the same road. It needed so little to pass to, perhaps, a delightful friendship ; but youth, bold in most things, is punctilious in social matters, There was the little girl in the Woolwich train. She had a small, gentle face, and looked as though she worked hard. She was obviously poor, and her dull clothes were patched and darned. We met every morning on the platform, and after a time she began to look at me, timidly, as though I were a dangerous character. Perhaps her suspicion was justified, for, when the train came in, I would stand back until she had chosen a carriage, and then make for that one ; and I think she had begun to notice that trick. And in the evenings I would often lose my homeward train from Charing Cross, waiting about to travel home with her.

I do hope I didn't alarm her, and that she didn't take me for one of those nasty flirtatious fellows. All I wanted was to be her Fairy Prince ; to take charge of her, and give her feasts and outings ; theatres, and bus rides to Richmond on Sunday, and tea in the park, and concerts, and week-end walks. I would buy nice clothes for her, and dress her slim figure agreeably to the season, in the best that Hanover Square could show (I was then earning thirty shillings a week). I would give her pretty frillies and sound smart shoes, for the patched and clumsy pair she was wearing, and spring-

time fabrics and mischievous hats and roguish scarves. . . . But how could I explain my attitude when I couldn't even get to know her ?

Altogether, I think the portraits outside the theatres were less disturbing to the spirit ; they were so patently unapproachable by outsiders. The Garrick Theatre was not my only haunt. There was a second fancy, upon whose picture I used to dote as a boy ; and I think many others must have done the same. She appeared in many of the Lyceum pantomimes, and her picture was prominently displayed there. Some years ago, in a daily paper, I described her delightful stage-work, and that description brought me letters from all quarters, and brings them even to-day. Apart from the letters from London and the provinces, I had enquiries from South Africa, New Zealand, Canada, the Gold Coast and America. A proud young lady she should be. All the writers had been Londoners, and all remembered her and asked—What has become of her ? What is she doing now ? I don't know. She, too, has grown up, and I haven't seen her name on a bill these many years. I could not, therefore, satisfy my exiled fellows, for whom this child still, it seems, illuminates the mists of town-memories, Perhaps the editors of the *Era* or the *Stage* can oblige ?

This is, I think, one of the many compensations for the trials of stage life, that, although the actors' and actresses' work is so fleeting and impermanent, yet, in distant parts of the world, their memories are cherished. They

stand, as it were, as types of the town, of home, and their names are bandied over camp fires in Australia, on the South African veldt, and in huts of the Malay Straits and the sweltering shores of Pacific islands. When exiles have lost interest in all else of home affairs, theatrical matters still seem to stimulate them ; and under alien skies the legs of some London dancing girl are remembered and celebrated. Politics, society, even sport may go—but the theatre and its sprites are the last to go. You may prove this easily.

Every author has his little crowd of invisible playmates, those unknown correspondents whose letters fall upon him with News from Nowhere. Some visit him but once ; some make an appearance upon the publication of each new book. Others are recurrent, bound by no time or occasion, but sniping the author when the mood takes them.

They may be divided into Classes. There are the Shy Congratulator, the Fulsome Flatterer, the Confidential, the Condemnatory, the Accusative, the Provocative, and the Peremptory.

My latest screed from Nowhere belongs to the last class. It comes from Montana, U.S.A., and comes like a lump of copper from the Montana mines. It is written on a postcard, and reads like a telegram :

> " Mr. Birks.—Your last story in the—— Magazine. Why write such miserable stuff ? In future write happier stories and end them more satisfactorily.—John W. Griggs."

Then there is the, " Dear Mr. Burke, I feel

I must tell you the story of my life" kind of letter. It comes frequently. The writers of these letters tell me their inmost joys and their secret sorrows. Often the poor author, who is totally unfitted for the job, has to sit in the confessional box and listen to dreadful things; and is asked to advise upon matters that require the most considered judgment of the experienced matron.

These people write to the novelist, I suppose, because he is remote from their immediate circle, and because, if he is a true novelist, he will understand the twists and vagaries of the human heart. Looking through my file of letters from strangers is like looking into dim by-ways of the human soul. I have learned how A took her first step downwards; why young B is in such distress; why C cannot live with his people; and what joy would be D's if only she could get to London.

These letters distress me. I am no Father Confessor, and I have not the wonderful gift of "Aunt Mabel" and "Mrs. Wisdom" and "Lady Felicia," and those correspondents of the weekly home papers, in advising sagely on every contingency of this close-faceted life.

I prefer John W. Griggs or the people who Ask For Things.

Like this:

"Dear Mr. Burke,—I have got one of your books from the library, and I enjoyed it so much that I would be glad if you would send me a set of your books autographed."

Or this:

"Sir.—I have just read your latest book. What a beastly mind you must have.
Faithfully yours, X—— Y——."

And this:

"Dear Sir,—In an article of yours in the ——on Wapping, you mention ivory carving. I have a quantity of broken ivory, and if you can put me in touch with a dealer I will pay you a decent commission on results."

Until I published a book I did not know that there were so many Thomas Burkes in London. I have had letters from, I think, ten of them. Each salutes his namesake. Each writes in the same style. And each suggests that I might be willing to do a hard-up namesake a good turn, mentioning the wretched sum of even five shillings as a godsend. It is notable that all these Thomas Burkes live at newspaper shops or barbers' shops—"Letters may be addressed Here."

But the surest way of calling these voices from the void and bursting your letter-box is to touch, in some magazine, review or newspaper, upon some controversial matter of the theatre. Say, for example, quite casually, that you remember the night when Billy Merson first sang "Let's all Go Down the Strand." Just that. And for the next month you'll be busy. First you'll get the English packet—letters and post-cards—curt, rude, polite, discursive, prolix, terse; bawling, telling you, begging to point out, venturing to differ. By the time they have eased, the first overseas batch comes in, and

you will begin to realise the influence of one of our empires upon the other. And when you have strewed these letters neatly around your study floor you have a picture of the five continents in a state of upheaval, downing tools and upping pens to put this portentous blunder right and send across the world a mighty chorus of "*He didn't! It was Charles Whittle.*" You might misquote Gladstone's dictum of 1881; you might say that Wagner's operas were never performed in England before 1900; you might speak of Ben Jonson's "Taming of the Shrew"; your letter-bag would suffer no strain. But the most trivial matter of the theatre arouses the passions of half the globe; and rightly, for the theatre is the soul of a city, and the drama is its pulse.

I know there are many people, who, while interested in the drama, loathe the theatre, and to whom an evening at a play is three hours' boredom; but I don't understand them, any more than I understand the man who is interested in politics. But, if they find a visit to the theatre so dreary an occasion, I suggest the Dining-Room Table Theatre, with which they can indulge their taste for the drama at choice, and play their favourites as they would like them to be played. They will find it less physically exhausting than a visit to the theatre, and they will not be bothered by the posturings of actors and actresses. And, when bored, they can stop the show at a moment's notice. They say, if you want a thing done well, do it yourself. Very good; and if these people want a satis-

fying dramatic entertainment, but dislike the theatre, they can make their own entertainment on a Pollock Theatre, as used by Stevenson.

In odd corners of London may still be found relics and survivals of old trades and customs. Even as the old actor, whose day is past, can still find people to stand him a drink and listen to his tale of old triumphs, so these old trades still find their patrons. One might think that the cinema had killed the magic-lantern ; yet there is still big business in lantern slides. One might think that the theatre-going habit would have killed the toy theatre and marionette business, but there still survives in London the Last of the Toy Theatre Merchants.

Amid the sad clamours of Hoxton Street, Mr. B. Pollock, of whom Stevenson wrote so appreciatively in "Memories and Portraits," is still doing good business at "The Juvenile Drama House," with his Penny Plain and Twopence Coloured. His shop makes a gay splash of colour in the plain stretch of Hoxton Street. Here, of old time, the "old Brit" nursed the now departed splendours of good mellow-drama and sublimely idiotic farce ; and nightly, in the gallery, your fourpenn'orth of "lean-over" would harrow you or terrify you or delight you, or set you kicking your legs, or somebody else's, with inexpressible glee. Heroic heroes, radiant heroines, and unspeakable villains made jubilee every night in Hoxton before the best audience in England. Now there is only Mr. Pollock left to carry on the great tradition ; and, next to the pictures, the great delight of the Hoxton kids

is to glue their faces against the window of his shop, which is filled with deep-hued posters of brigands, pirates, buccaneers, Rob Roy, Don Quixote, Aladdin, Paul Clifford, and other giants of the nursery, and with spangled "sets" of ballets and transformation scenes.

And the industry flourishes. Stevenson wrote of it as the delight of his childhood, but Mr. Pollock has few child customers. Sometimes the adults may pretend that they are buying for "the children," but don't you believe it. I don't, nor does Mr. Pollock. He knows the appeal of his goods to the little bit of childhood that remains in the greybeard. Stevenson himself paid many visits to the little shop, and Mr. Pollock speaks of Stevenson as pleasantly as Stevenson spoke of him. A firm customer of to-day is Mr. G. K. Chesterton, who thinks out his articles while playing with a Pollock home-theatre; and in the past Miss Ellen Terry was a frequent patron, and possesses a complete collection of Pollock dramas, so rich in the savour of Old England. Listen: "Charles the Second," "Children in the Wood," "Corsican Brothers," "Daughter of the Regiment," "Douglas," "King Henry," "Lord Darnley," "The Lord Mayor's Fool," "The Mistletoe Bough," "The Miller and his Men," "Paul Clifford," "Timour the Tartar," "The Silver Palace," "The Waterman," "The Blind Boy," "The Maid and the Magpie."

It is pleasing to learn from Mr. Pollock of the popularity of his products. One seldom hears about them, and seldom sees them. Yet he has

recently had orders from large country houses and from Hampton Court Palace and St. James's Palace, and is anticipating a good winter season. And I don't wonder, for they make a fascinating pastime. The setting of the stage, and the working of the characters is at once soothing and stimulating—as soothing as patience and as stimulating as chess—and much more interesting. And it can be played alone or with a crowd.

Mr. Pollock is a charming, grey-haired figure, with the manners of the old school. He keeps shop with dignity and courtesy, as men kept shop in the past ; and his dim room, with its echoes and flavours of aforetime romance, is an agreeable retreat from the dolours of the district. In his naive delight in his craft, he reminds one of the toymakers of old Nuremberg, or of a Hans Andersen character. I believe he would love to give his theatres away to the grubby urchins at his door, only—I think he knows that they would not be as highly appreciated as they deserve ; free passes for the " Pictures " would be more appreciated. He loves to talk of his theatres and their history, and of his distinguished patrons. Every theatre is made on the premises by himself and he has his own printing-press for his plays. I introduced them to Charles Chaplin when he was over here, and took him to the shop one night. He was as delighted as a child at its contents, and the sounding glories of the catalogue of plays ; and was crazy to return next day to buy three or four theatres and a bundle of the dramas to

take back to Hollywood. There, I have no doubt, he has introduced them to others, to the deserved profit of Mr. Pollock ; and thus Stevenson, who wrote of Hoxton and of California, may bring them, by this fragile link, together.

. . . . . .

I believe we had got to Shaftesbury Avenue when I broke off so abruptly. Well, we passed through "theatre-land," and went on towards Oxford Street, and thence we strolled East and West, and London soaked into us and enriched us, and brought us out in full flower of amiable and peculiar talk. We ranged the philosophies, and remembered good stories, and Monk, with buxom face and twinkling eye, quoted Edgar Saltus, and we walked to the fluent pace of the night amid multitude and mystery.

We covered many miles. Starting from Piccadilly Circus we challenged the recesses of Barnsbury and Canonbury, and finished late in "The London Apprentice" at Hoxton, striking in our path cunning episodes and curious drama in those shy quarters that are so generous with impressions to the amateur. Not in the great roads of London, its hotels or big houses, do you come upon these nocturnes. These show the things of the moment, the spirit of the times, the vexations and dismays, the patching and changing and shifting. The enduring things, the steady, soft-moving life of London, are in the background. Down the side-streets—that's where joy lies. That's where you must seek her ; in small taverns, in the movie-houses, in the recreation grounds, in the little local clubs,

among the clerks, shop-assistants, labourers, charwomen—anybody, in short, who works hard for a scanty wage, and takes fun, when it comes, with both hands, voraciously and gleefully.

Beauty and sweet temper live in these side-streets, with their ardent dark and meagre light, their flowing murmur of voices. Through their half-open doors or unshaded windows the passer catches sudden vignettes of tea-table and fire and strange figures. We see them as phantoms of another world, idly busy upon their various occasions, reading, sewing, eating, lounging, posed in their harmonious setting as exquisitely as in the frozen moment of statuary. I have known these by-ways from earliest childhood, and I hold them closer than any of the grander beauties of the town. I think with peculiar affection of certain side-streets in Islington, Bermondsey, Paddington and Canning Town, and the glamorous interiors that have held me with the shock of sudden poetry; and there's a street in Stepney that I have named The Street of Beautiful Children. But of that I will tell you in another chapter. Through and through these streets we went noctambulating, presented at every turn with warm nooks, robust highways, or heartless spaces that filled the night with innuendoes of dread or romance; and stumbling here and there upon the midnight lovers.

Don't we all know them—those midnight lovers? Haven't we all, at sudden corners, blundered upon them? Nay, we, who have been boy or girl, have we not all, at some time

or other, made one with that scattered crowd of the late hours that stands in the sweet security of two in dark doorways and discreet alleys where the lamplight does not gloat ; saying good night until to-morrow ? In the larger hours of the city's night, in all such retreats, you will come upon this wordless sacrament of first love : the flutter of a white frock against the railings, boy and girl in shadow, heart to heart, careless of all but their own ecstasy. . . .

For the streets of London are, for the poorer young people, what the drawing-room, the dance, the conservatory, the quiet garden, and the taxi, are for those in happier circumstances. Only in the misty corners of the thickening streets can they attain the solitude they seek. For them there is no elsewhere. Monitorial Councils drive them out of the parks at just that hour when a seat under unsuspicious trees is most desirable ; and the front parlour at home is too public, too fraught with interruption and restriction, even if it were available. Often it is not ; for working-class parents, like Councils, have "views"—very strict "views"—about boy-and-girl love. In many homes the daughter dare not acknowledge a sweetheart to the family until she be turned eighteen. But love does not wait upon these arbitrary distinctions : it awakens when it will. You may forbid and forbid, and lecture and admonish, but before Maudie is out of the school playground she has her boy ; and this way or that they will meet ; and the naughty girl will stay out late, even if she does suffer the indignity of chastisement

from Father. Really, there should be some sort of continuation classes for parents to help them to remember what they so quickly forget when they become parents—their own youth.

For the young lover, then, paradoxically, the street is more private than the home. Even when the front parlour *is* conceded, the sense of complete privacy is lacking ; the neighbourhood of the family is too imminent. But the stars, the dumb walls, the pavements, and the rumour of near traffic and crowd, enclose them in greater security than any parlour can afford ; and in the hesitant dusk of July, the keen glitter of winter or the rain-streaked autumn nights, through the procession of seasons and weathers, they snatch their hour of solitude, posed in unconscious beauty. During the evening they walk here and there about the less hurried streets, or sit in the more sequestered seats at the picture-palace ; but in the hour of parting their feet are still ; and in crepuscular corners, wherever the friendly shadows are assembled, they impede your passage, lost in silent wonder of each other's magnificence, forgetful of the stress of the great chords of the day under the grateful movements of the night. But they are not abashed by your intrusion. It is you who hurry by with averted head, though your embarrassment is idle ; for between your world and theirs float the clouds of their adolescent rapture. They have not seen you or even heard your step. Nor would they care if they had. In their exquisite moment, with pulses thrilling each to each, what are you and your pedestrian occasions to them ?

You cannot dismay them or lend them any increase of bliss; but, if your heart be not wholly wrapped in mundane things, *they* can lend *you* at least an echo of their own delight.

To me, these lovers are one of the chief beauties of London's night. To be abroad, between eleven o'clock and midnight, in the great highways, and to know that down every little side-street, stretching right and left of you, boys and girls, at gates and door-ways, are making their long good-nights, is to suffer as sweet a thrill as that which possesses themselves.

This open-secret, by-way love-making is, perhaps, an affair peculiarly English. On the Continent, where love-making is more free, more public, and celebrated in groups, the close colloquies of the back-street are infrequent; but here, in the big cities, and particularly in London, where young love is pryed upon, and dogged and derided and hounded by authority; in the country, too, by field-gates and stiles, young England lingers and lounges in crystallised solitude, setting its happiness like pearls against the shell of forbiddance. For them, each night is a separate and single casket, loaded with the unprofitable gold of romance. Life's confines are broken down; the world widens; the stars thicken; witchery is abroad. Then they live those rich moments that come at times to all of us; moments when, by some fortuitous agreement of place and time, some happy harmony of sky, air, place and time, the accustomed things are translated to the plane of dream and become as a stage set for

fantastic adventure. They are the moments when the wings of Ariel brush our sorry lives, and the world wakens into vivid breath. Magic hangs on every step, and, for that brief while, anything may happen ; all things are possible. We have all known such moments and hours ; they come when they will, often in incongruous situations ; but to young love they come at every meeting.

For many lovers her gate or her doorway is a spot of danger, and they must make their partings in more distant nooks. Wherever there is a square or alley or remote corner, they discover it, and make it the scene of their last caresses ; and most couples have a special corner of their own. It may be where they first met, or where they first kissed or had their first long talk. That corner, for them, becomes consecrated. It is no common street or square or passage ; no matter of brick and stone and paving, to be trodden carelessly as they tread other parts of the city ; but a little street of love's own fashioning dropped into London, touched with fantasy, coloured with dream, and very dear. Even when young love does not come to harvest, when one or other goes gaily after fresh faces, never again is the forsaken one able to pass *that* corner or *that* alley with level pulse or unconsidering eye.

And every street in London is, for somebody, such a consecrated spot. In every district which holds sheltered inlets untroubled by the tide of traffic and the confusion of men, the youth of the city has built a bower of memory.

These spots you may locate in the morning. Clues are left for the observant, and the chief clue is—hairpins. On this evidence I judge the Mall to be the favourite spot for dalliance, for often, in a morning walk from the Admiralty Arch to Buckingham Palace, I have counted, under the trees, over a hundred hairpins, not to mention some half-dozen scraps of ribbon; relics of the abandon of the night.

While this festival of good-nights moves through the whole year, it is more observed in the winter months. This is not, as you might think, because the light evenings withhold the wistful quiet and dusk that love demands, but because, as I think, the winter is love's true season. That is not truly said—that in the Spring a young man's fancy lightly turns to thoughts of love. So far as town life is concerned, it is a fallacy. The Spring is the very season when the thoughts of your urban youth are fixed otherwhere. He is concerned with sterner matters. He is called by cricket and tennis, by swimming, by running, and other Olympian business. His mind is ever occupied, by work during the day, and by games during the evening. He can't be bothered with love. But in the winter . . .

Then, time hangs heavily. He is at a loose end, and his fancy, seeking employment, does then turn for distraction to the empire of girls. In the glamour of the street lights, or in the inviting flicker of firelight, he bursts into recognition of Daisy's nice eyes or the jolly curls of Joan or the wonderful smile of the tea-shop waitress.

Winter inspires an appetite for warmth and intimacy. We feel a need for social contact. In the summer we are separate and scattered; we wish to escape direct neighbourhood, and loneliness has its charms. But the winter calls us in to the camp fire. It is a season of drawing together, of communion, a throw-back to the cave days, when men gathered together for mutual protection through the long darkness.

In this season, from October to March, the lads and lassies seek each other; and in the squares of Bloomsbury, the narrow streets of Soho, in tenement doorways of Spitalfields and Stepney, in the courts and passages of Shadwell and Wapping, in the sunken, broken streets about Bankside, in the swimming light of the Embankment or the luminous dark of the Mall, the couples spend their midnight minutes under the indifferent stars. Pass through any square of Bloomsbury or any of the little squares and alleys of the East at that hour, and in the hush that enfolds these retreats, so that they might be hamlets of a rural valley, you will be conscious of company. And though you see nobody your ears receive fragile murmurs, and sweet-ringing laughter troubles each shadowy corner. Somewhere beyond—it may be miles—lies the City. Notes of its travail come to you. Melancholy motor-horns hoot across the slumbering houses. Wheels rumble. Your ears gather the desiccated noises of the night—the lazy hum of many active voices. But here, by the railings, or in the quadrangle of the tenement, or down that court, here is rich quiet, made richer by

whisperings or by that living silence of young lips communing without speech.

It is a consecration of the night, which none but devils would profane. Unhappily, there are many devils who delight in this blasphemy; female devils in uniform, who make a quest of interrupting this sacrament, and dropping damp paws upon the pleasant heart of love, and whispering suggestions of obscenity into innocent ears. The policewoman, as well as the young lover, has discovered the shy corner, and hovers about it on silent feet, seeking dirt where none is, and finding it; warning decent girls against their decent lovers, and poisoning early affection with physical revelations. Surely so sweet a thing as this, that illumines the squalors of our streets with beauty, should be regarded only with grace and understanding; not through the red-flannel murk of the policewoman's mind? But they will not hear it. They are deaf to song and blind to the spring; and for love they have nothing but a formula of the consulting-room.

But sometimes they go beyond themselves, and do more than they mean to do. Take the case of the officious policewoman, who, at midnight, descried two figures on a public seat in a quiet side-road. They sat together, with arms enlaced, lip to lip. To them, heavily, the policewoman: "Look here, don't you think it's time you two were in bed?"

Well, let the hard-eyed dragon pad and prowl, and indulge to the full her lust of Interferingness; glory and loveliness have not yet passed

away, nor will they at the bidding of such creatures. To-night and every night youth will love and laugh. Law and order may control the fools; they will never control the fairies.

. . . . . .

And now the coffee stalls began to rumble from obscure hospices, and the cheerful glow of that which pitches beneath Shoreditch Church attracted us and drew from all corners our fellows, wanderers and borrowers from the night. Within the narrow arc of its light gathered workers, idlers, vagrants, and the down-and-out, elbow to elbow, saucer to saucer, in a grand but transient democracy; all silent or exchanging only mumbles. I know not why the coffee-stall crowd is always silent, why the movement is so slow; the unaccustomed open-air and the vast night, I suppose, thwart any attempt at the trivial and the chatty. The same crowd in a bar or a coffee-shop would talk; but always at the stall I have found the customers glum and reticent, mumbling only of necessity, crushed, as I say, by the solemnity of the hour.

But there is one coffee-stall which is a spectacle, and about which are swift movement and clatter and babble. This is the firemen's coffee-stall, which is brought out on the occasion of a big fire, when the men have to work hours at a stretch without respite. On the arrival of the official stall they drop out by ones or twos and grab a little nourishment, and then back to the hose to relieve others. No lounging or

mumbling here, but brisk business all the time, with bobbing helmets, quick elbows, soiled uniforms, sweat, and wet, smoky faces.

The coffee that the stalls provide is hot, but one cannot say much more for it. It is scarcely a food or a stimulant, and, when we had finished our mug, I bethought me of a snug interior, and I heard the sizzle of eggs and bacon, and the clamour of complaining voices; and I spoke my thought to Monk. I had thought of a certain night-buffet near King's Cross, and we retired from the spot-light of the stall and took bus to the most agreeable of all suppers—supper in a "caravanserai."

There is a zest to this meal that is absent from others. It is as thrilling as those midnight feasts on the floor of the dormitory in other times. There you are, seated at the counter under a blind archway, girdled by the immense night; in it, yet enclosed from its surge. Outside, the cars hoot and voices wander. Inside, the bacon hisses in the pan. Outside, cold and dark. Inside, light and warmth and teasing odours, growling voices, comminations, and tales of adventure. Never do eggs-and-bacon eat so well as at this hour and in these surroundings. Foods, like people, have their peculiar and proper setting when they are at their best. *Pommes frites* at the Carlton are not half so delicious as a paperful of "chips" eaten under the moon.

While Fred "did" our bacon, we sat among the chauffeurs and their n-yah, n-yah, n-yahing at the world and the times, and felt like Daniels.

For we had been guilty of those very offences upon which they were now growling anathema.

"Ur—quar' ter twelve and wonnid me to go to Wimbledon. 'What's it worth?' I says."

"An' woddid 'e say?"

"Said 'e'd see abaht it."

"*See* abaht it?"

"Ur."

"And woddid *you* do?"

"Told 'im where 'e could put 'is fare, an' left 'im standin'."

"Bloody well think so, too."

And again:

"'And there's tuppence for yesself,' she says. Tuppence! On a seven-shilling fare."

"Wod yeh say to that?"

"I di'n say much. But I just give 'er one look what she won' fergit in a 'urry, an' tole 'er to put it in the kids' money-box."

"You was too easy. They want 'andling, them sort."

"Ah, but y'never know—with a woman. "Specially that kind, what knows regulations and all. Woddud yew do wi' one like that?"

"Me? Rub 'er nose in it. Ur!"

The bacon is done, and Fred serves it. Fred is a real dab at two and a rasher, but he mustn't be tested beyond that. Still, what more do you want? All artists have their limitations; versatility is only for the mediocre; and in two and a rasher Fred expresses himself. He has a view of life tempered by his immediate environment of heavy odours and hot air and rough language and bustle.

"What you want in this life, y'know, me boy, is to keep yer 'ead. 'At's all. Jus' keep yer 'ead, an' yor'l git on. Let the others do the grousin'—'at's the secret. Look at me—ain't I got enough sometimes to sen' a feller batty? But look at me. I never worry." Plop goes an egg to the floor. "'At's the second to-day—but what's the good o' gettin' fussed up? Take life easy—'at's my motter. 'Ere—your doings is ready—give us up yer plate." Smack goes another rasher, pink and white and crisp and curly.

"But wouldn't a little method make all the difference?" I asked him.

"Method? Coo, I ain' got no time for method. Arst the boys 'ere what this place'd be like if I run it on Method. Keep yer 'ead and carry on—'at's the way to get the work done."

For austerity and precision, as for Method, Fred has no time. For him life means fullness, amplitude, ready companionship, and standing the racket; a sort of fine bright formlessness; in short, two and a rasher. To see him with a fryingpan in each hand, and two separate and intricate conversations engaging his spare attention, is to see a pretty piece of work. I have never seen a woman-cook handle a fryingpan with such grace and facility.

And now the boys—though the term hardly fits your taxi-man—began to crowd in and clamour; so, warmed and fed, I holla'd for Parker, and Parker arrived and sped us through the brooding streets to our beds.

There is quiet delight in motoring through London at midnight. One seems to flow through goblin streets of lonely lamps, with nothing but the humming of the engine to disturb—no, confirm the large tranquillity of the city. The cool wind beats upon your face, and the stars and the clouds, in the subdued light, discover themselves. Commerce stands shuttered and dumb; the roads lie clear before you; you may speed or crawl as you will. The tide is out. You ride alone through the loaded silence of the night, amid living enterprise and monuments of past endeavour; alone, but with a pleasant sense of the neighbourhood of Parker.

Who is Parker? Parker is the World's Best Chauffeur.

There are those who possess automobiles, and those who are possessed by them; and there is myself who have not so much as a flivver to my name. I cannot afford a car, but I command ten cars and four chauffeurs. On the rare occasions when I require to travel comfortably, a call to the garage round the corner gives me my choice of these cars and—Parker. And should one car, on the road, forget its office, a word across the telephone brings up another. There I have the bulge on the car-owner; but my biggest bulge is Parker. I do not have to tinker with the thing; I do not have to keep eyes and nerves taut for the hazards of the road and warning signs. I am free to observe or to contemplate, to set my mind roaming where it will, thanks to Parker, the wizard, whose magic touch on his mechanical slave carries me across England.

When I am with him I throw aside all care, and my motto for the day is: "Leave it to Parker." He has not the haughtiness and severity of your private chauffeur nor the broody dolours of your taxi-man. He is not a part of his machine. When cars were but thought of, Parker was driving a pair-horse brougham, and the flexibility and fluent temper required by that job remain with him. He has a strong air of past times about him. He is a rehabilitation of one of the old artists of the whip. His round red face was made for a low-crowned beaver, and he would look fit in a five-caped coat, taking the Devonport "Quicksilver" down the road; and "Nimrod" would have delighted to sit by him and record in the pages of "Fraser's" his talk and his mannerisms.

It is a pity that we have no C. J. Apperley with us to-day, to mark and celebrate the pretty styles of our best chauffeurs. (Here's a hint for John Prioleau.) Parker deserves such notice. Driving a car is not, with him, a job. It is his daily stimulant. He misses a day from the wheel as other men miss their morning drink or their dinner. He is only happy on his car, and not to be driving is a keen punishment. Each morning he goes to the garage with a fresh delight, as if motors had just been invented, and each night he puts the car away regretfully. Away from it he is lost, unhappy. Keep him out as long as you like: he never complains. His car is his mistress, and she seems to return his caresses. He starts her up with a throb of joy. He leaps to her, and he settles into his

seat with a Wrrhmph ! of content. His touch is soft and soothing. He does not, like your taxi-driver, jam his brakes on ; almost one might say he strokes them on, so light is the contact of his hand with the lever. His manner at the steering-wheel has the finish and precision of Cinquevalli or Chaplin ; nowhere too light or too stern. And his back, to the passenger inside, is not the sombre mass of spleen that your taxi-man presents, but a big, generous, equable back, able and willing to carry all the burdens of the day ; a round, affable back, that looks as though it had often been smacked in loud good-fellowship. I wonder what would happen to a fare who gave a taxi-driver or a private chauffeur a friendly pat on the back ; summons for assault, I expect.

Parker and I have covered many hundred miles of English road, and have taken long tours together. He is a perfect road companion. Nothing disturbs him. You cannot surprise him, and he will never surprise you. He is ready for anything ; never dismayed by mischances or change of plan, but facing all the hazards and petty emergencies of English travel with equanimity, and their amenities with a round noonday smile. If you're out of matches, Parker has plenty. If you're short of cigarettes, Parker's got some. If you want a postcard and a stamp, Parker's got 'em. If you've got a headache, Parker will produce menthol. At all hours of the day or night—and he has often been out with me all night—he is the same blithe soul : a good Cockney, taking his banana, in the most tiresome situations, with relish.

Little he cares if it snows. Even his language, when a tyre bursts, is not bitter and explosive, but full and round and copious, flowing steadily like an Arabic imprecation. We have heard how our army swore terribly in Flanders, and I think it must have sworn with equal vigour in Serbia : for Parker spent the five years of the war driving lorries over the Serbian mountains, and making his own roads. After that, the troublous occasions of English road-travel have no power to dishevel his philosophy ; and, though he speaks to a burst tyre in unforgettable accents, whatever gust of language comes from him comes with the large flavour of the open air upon it. It is without malice. I have been with him in the middle of the Yorkshire wold, in a pouring rain, with a disordered magneto, and he was unmoved. He did but look upon the thing, and say, in conversational tones, beautiful things that had in them the warmth of the sun and red wine and the south wind ; and then got down to the job, remembering that he was on a Yorkshire wold, and not on the Serbian hills.

Often I spend a loose half-hour in his garage. The yard is open day and night, and wears an atmosphere of illimitable travel. To the fanciful the mere sight of a garage, with its adumbrations of adventure, sets the heart tingling. Sitting in Parker's yard I am in the midst of movement ; of stories of encounters, of inns and old towns and long roads ; of the going and returning of cars. They *could* tell some stories of their clients, Parker and his colleagues, but, unhappily, they don't. They are discreet.

They hear nothing, and they see nothing of their clients' affairs. But, in the lighted evening, when they return from journeys large or little, the yard is full of good gossip and anecdotal road-talk, more interesting, to me, than any other casual talk ; and, listening, one may compile one's own Cary or Paterson. Some, maybe, are returned from the North or the West country, and some from station or theatre trips to town. Then Parker, big and bluff and imperturbable, comes in from South Wales, redolent of the road ; and sets out again, to take an old lady on a half-mile stage.

There is a pleasant new-world flavour about it. Until ten years ago, talk of the delights of the road meant quotation from old coaching books. One harked back to the 'twenties. Now, they are present delights. The gusto which animated the road-chapters of Dickens, "Nimrod," de Quincey, Disraeli and Birch-Reynardson, plays again about our highways and roadside villages and inns. We are all in this. The sharrabang has reopened the road for the poorest of us, and we can all catch the tang of open-air travel and the ecstasy of speed, which the railway cannot lend you. Even the drivers of the motor-coaches are assuming something of the box-seat manner, acquiring something of Parker. Once out of London, they give hints of a life apart from levers. They have their moods of levity. They exchange back-chat with the guard. The old road-spirit seizes them, and, if you have made a reading of Outram Tristram, Charles G. Harper, and other road-historians, and follow it with a sharrabang trip, you will

find that only the vehicle has changed. All else remains. Passengers, driver and guard are wearing different clothes, but the incidents of the trip repeat themselves out of history. Still the village worthies come to their doors to see us pass, and the children to wave and shout. Still the luggage is stowed away in the boot. Still the driver and guard have their favourite damsels, whom they salute in passing with elaborate pantomime that permits no misunderstanding. Still they execute commissions in town for the remote roadside folk, and drop choice packages into front gardens, or carry the evening paper from the nearest town and toss it to Granfer at the cross-roads.

Perhaps the new-old spirit is not so lively in the inns, but I am a little sceptical of some of those glowing pictures of Mine Hosts and their impossibly hospitable establishments. Different travellers record different impressions. Dickens himself has given us descriptions in much milder mood than those of "Pickwick." Even in that book he speaks out at times, as in the descriptions of the "White Horse" at Ipswich, a true picture, I imagine, of the average coaching inn of those times. Read the essays in "The Uncommercial Traveller" on "Refreshment for Travellers," on "Jairing's" and "The Old-Established Bull's Head, with its old-established cookery, and its old-established frowziness, and its old-established principles of plunder," and the description of the "Temeraire Hotel" in "A Little Dinner in an Hour."

The strictures which he passes on the inns of his time are sadly true to-day. Seldom do you,

travelling life's dull round, find your welcome at an inn. In many parts, if you travel in a sharrabang, you are met with the notice: "Char-a-banc Parties Not Served."

Still, the delight of the road mostly tunes us to delight in everything. We are in a state to be easily pleased, serenely reconciled to discourtesy, and finding an ill-cooked meal as agreeable and stimulating as a dinner at our favourite town restaurant. We laugh at surly innkeepers as people laughed at the insolence and brutality of the stage-coachman. But, if you are out with Parker, he will see that you are not put upon. It is as dangerous to be funny or brusque with Parker as to monkey with a safety-razor. He is a member of the A.A. and the M.U., and he is not standing any nonsense from innkeepers who fall from the standards demanded by those organisations for their members. Let there be any overcharging or ill-service, and Parker will see to it; Parker will report it. Temperate as he is, he can, for the occasion, be truculent; and he has a robust figure and a heavy arm. The most saturnine landlord would quail before his "Here—what's this?" Simple words, but they can carry much. With him behind you, you need fear not the heat of the sun or the winter's furious rages; or any machinations of the wicked. No highwayman would have held up *his* coach; at the sudden turn of the head, the implacable face, and the "Hi—what d'ye think you're doing? Want me to set about you?" Mr. Turpin would have been off and away. And had I been a passenger, and a pistol had been thrust through the window, I would

have dismissed the matter with : " Ask Parker about it ! "

And Parker would see to it, as he sees to everything. He drives you as you wish to be driven. He attends to your comfort. He anticipates your little whims and remembers your habits. He is a happy companion, as I know from evenings we have spent together when on a tour ; and, while you are his passenger, he is your friend, counsellor, and protector.

. . . . . .

And so home and to bed.

In the Streets of Film-land

The film-world of London begins in Soho, overflows into Shaftesbury Avenue and Gerrard Street, and stretches to the suburbs, where studios are established at Walthamstow, Ealing, Shepherd's Bush, Twickenham, Elstree, and Whetstone. It is a queer world of queer people ; a serious world, wanting the zest and cameraderie of the stage-world and the quiet zeal of the business world. It is a bastard, parents unknown. Your film-director has the appearance of something between a ring-master and a Junior Whip, and the business and executive side of the industry attracts attention by its facial features and its Oriental nomenclature. But these are found throughout the entertainment world and in any industry whose profits turn on exploiting the idle hours of the public. Your film-actor is a creature apart.

He has little in common with the stage-actor. He is not gregarious. His speechless work has left him with little facility for chit-chat and none for happy talk. Mostly he is glum, like the taxi-driver, the lift-man, and others who work with mechanical things. He lives in an atmosphere, not of imagination (that quality would damn his chances of engagements), but of reality. When he goes out to rescue the damsel from the sinking boat, he does rescue her from a

real sinking boat in real water ; he is incapable of deluding his audience with simulated heroisms. To convince by illusion demands higher qualities than he possesses. Raptures, fine gestures, sweeping movements, splendid outbursts are forbidden him ; the machine has no use for them. Repression, not expression, is the note of his work, and every movement must be slow and deliberate. No audience inspires his efforts or rewards his response to that inspiration. He plays to the producer and the machine. His world's a shadow-show played in a box under white lights, and inspiration may not enter that box. He has nothing to do but obey the producer ; his not to reason why ; his but to do what he's told, comforted by knowing that every effect has been "thought out," arrived at, without his help, by the system of the cash-register. And, as he is in his work, so he is in his private life, considering and calculating ; a creature of languid gesture with a dull light to the eye.

Life, for him, is no hectic kaleidoscope of work, crowds, the ascending hosannas of the multitude. He is never, like your stage-actor, who works through his imagination, ablaze with personality. He moves, in his own person, through greater actual trials and tribulations than any actor is called upon to simulate ; yet always he is morose and low-spirited. For his moving accidents are isolated occasions, nicely arranged. His work is a slow-moving matter, involving much preparation and hanging about, but, if done once, it is done. He does not have to work himself up six nights a week, to do the

same old thing that he has been doing for three hundred nights, and do it well. Even his breathless rescues from cliff-faces are quieter occasions than the "big scene" of a bedroom comedy. Truly, his professional life is as flat and monotonous as the life of a bank clerk. There is no excitement in carrying the girl from the burning house. No acting, no personal interest are required for these "stunt-merchants." You have only to perform the deed, in the right clothes, and then you're finished. The cheery, chatty crowd at a theatrical rehearsal, abrupt, generous, free, is the precise opposite of the film-studio company, which has somewhat the atmosphere of a parish-hall meeting of church-workers. They look worried. They drift from instead of to their fellows. Your actor's instinct is to get together; your filmist's to go apart into a desert place. Heartiness and impulse are alien virtues to him.

No wonder they call it "the silent stage."

When Monk and I were invited recently by the producer of a prominent London film company to spend a day at his studio, we readily accepted, for we wanted to see something of the marvellous "inside" processes that produced this queer form of entertainment. We both love to see the wheels go round. So we set out for Islington, and found that the "studio" was a dismantled power-station—a tremendous barn of a place, which, despite the warm day, struck coldly. It was lofty and full of echoes, and its floor was littered with thick lines of lighting cables. On all sides were little islands of "sets," and we were led through halls,

through a drawing-room, through a dining-room, through the forecourt of a country mansion, and stumbled over cables and against the million-candle-power arc lamp before we found our producer, with a shade over his eyes, directing his people in a bedroom "set." Around this set were adjusted a number of iron frames, each holding a dozen glass cylinders of blinding white-green light. Over it, in what might be the flies, were the great arc-lamps. Each of these contraptions was in charge of a youth, and these youths were controlled by a chief, who gave them their orders and adjusted the apparatus at the wish of the camera-man. All were wearing eye-shades.

Outside the set sat those actors not immediately concerned but ready for their call, dressed and made-up. Immediately in front of the set was the slim movie-camera and the camera-man, and near him the bulky "still" camera and its operator. Also in front sat a girl with the scenario before her, whose business it was to watch the dress of each character. Often two consecutive scenes of a film-play are filmed months apart and in different places, and this girl must note the dress of each actor, even to the most minute details; so that a character shall not be seen arriving at the door of a house wearing a bow-tie and immediately entering the drawing-room in a knot tie. Still, with the keenest eye and the most voluminous notes to assist, these things do happen, and the producer is blamed, as he is blamed for everything. Serve him right, too, for taking so much upon his own shoulders.

We didn't discover what was the theme of the picture they were making. I asked one of the actors, and he said he hadn't been told yet what the plot was: he only knew that he stole some valuable papers. Monk, who had at once turned an eye to the lovely leading woman, approached her, but she wasn't quite sure about it. She thought it was taken from some popular novel, and only knew that she was the daughter of a new-rich man who was getting into society.

I had expected tumult and shouting, hustle and raucous voices. I found nothing like this. The business was far, far less vocal and gestic than a Borough Council meeting. The only persistent noise was the hiss of the arc-lamps. Through that came, perfunctorily, the quiet voice of the producer: "We'll just have that over again, Miss Gwyn. Like this, you see." He entered the "set" and demonstrated, and, while this private dancing lesson was in progress, the rest of the company and workers gazed about them or brooded. Curious terms were uttered—the jargon of the studios: "Cross it," "Kill it," "Iris," "Hold it." The faces of the actors outside the arc-lamps were overlaid with powder and showed ghastly yellow; those within the glare looked seasick.

Then a peremptory voice fell from above:

"Light 'em up!"

With a click of levers the long lights of the great frames went up. Then, with megaphone, the producer directed the shot, in a slow, conversational tone. There was no excitement, no harassing.

"Camera! Come on, Butler. Come on,

detective. Come on, lady's maid. Agitated coming on. . . . Now for his right arm. . . . Knee in his back. . . . Down him. Struggle. . . . Fix him. Fine!"

He clapped his hands. The camera stopped. The actors scrambled up from the bedroom floor. The lost voice snapped "Lights out!" And again all was silence. The producer called a few people together, and conferred with carpenter and electricians and the scenario-writer. A "still" was taken of a dramatic point in the picture, and there were more conferences. Large notices on the walls prohibited smoking, but everybody smoked. Nothing seemed to be happening. The machinists lounged in shirt-sleeves against the lamps. Then the producer:

"Crowd for Bow Street, please!"

The crowd came forward readily and amiably; as though long familiar with Bow Street and its procedure. The producer and his assistant arranged them. What a crowd! Surely the highways and hedges had been raked for these, for they were not pretending to be idlers, loungers, wastrels; they were what they looked. "Types," said my producer. "Types. That's what we want in this game. Not the suggested character, but the type. Externals always. We don't want character-actors, however perfect they may be. We want types of familiar character. And you wouldn't believe how difficult it is to get 'em. I put out a call last week for a private detective. Did I get one? No. I had two hundred applicants—and every one was a bloody actor!"

The crowd got into place, and the producer

moved among them, posing and miming and explaining. They followed his movements with intent eyes, pelmanising each gesture, and practising it to themselves. The big frames of light were shifted from position to position, and then for the next ten minutes the crowd was drilled and drilled until it was proficient. They were not drilled by the method of the old-style pantomime producer with his oaths and his personal affronts, who worked off his own temper and exacerbated the tempers of his supers. They were coached gently, slowly and with unfailing courtesy and patience ; and the helpless dud was not summarily dismissed. He was politely put off. "I think Mr.--er—Jones, is it? I think I'll ask you to stand aside for awhile. I can use you better in the garden crowd."

A pleasant spirit prevailed ; subdued, but pleasant : and it was most prevalent at midday, when all the workers, like freed schoolchildren, trooped upstairs to the restaurant for lunch. All lunched together—producer, principals (in their yellow make-up), electricians, carpenters, commissionaires, porters, clerks ; and there was no line of demarcation. The junior electrician sat next to the star, and the commissionaire next the producer. All were at work on the picture, and all were equal. No one of them, alone, could ensure the success of the film. Actor or actress can sometimes " make " a play, but with the film it is entirely a matter of joint effort, and the "star" is no more important than any other. The cinema is a democratic institution, and it was pleasant to see the democratic spirit alive at headquarters. At afternoon tea,

which was served downstairs in the studio, the same quiet amenities prevailed. There was no bright chatter : it was not the beanfeast that a touring company of actors would have made it. Seriousness was the note, but it was a seriousness which all shared. The subordinates—the carpenters, machinists, and boys—had not that air of " When the hell are we going to finish and get away ? " One felt that they were intensely interested ; intensely.

It seemed distressing, though, that all this effort and intensity and money and thought should be given to such poor material. The " artistes " were mere lay-figures, using neither wit nor understanding, but moving to the order of the producer. And everything in this studio was genuine. In the film-world they have no time for the creation of atmosphere by illusion. The great drama may be performed on a blank stage with a back-cloth, but the novelette of the film cannot exist without wild changes of time and place and the trapping of exclamatory externals. Not the fine suggestion of realism, but the raw picture of reality, is all it can achieve. (I am dreading every day a " picture" of magic casements opening on the foam of perilous seas in fairy-lands forlorn.) The oak panelling in the dining-room set was not carved cardboard ; it *was* oak panelling, bought at great expense. The brick fire-place *was* brick. The books in the bookcases were real books. The jewels were real jewels. The silk dresses, and the furs, the old tapestry, the Knellers and Lelys were the real thing, hired at great trouble. Long thought and care had obviously gone to the

making of this obvious nonsense. The best that could be had was gathered for the production of the utterly unworthy. It was as though the Medici Society were to produce in Riccardi type, on real vellum, each copy signed by the Chairman of the Company, the current issues of "Comic Cuts" and "Forget-me-not."

Still, the film is with us and the cinema-palace is with us, and they have become part of modern life. The cinema-palace has brightened dull suburbs, both by its external bride-cake appearance and its functions, and the film has brought a flicker of outside life into desolate villages. It has rejoiced us with moving processions of radiant women and exquisite children. Its pictures of living things in motion are a wonder and a delight, and, if only it wouldn't try to tell stories, it would be wholly pleasant. But, with all its faults, it has filled an empty patch with brightness. Think of the wet evenings, before the cinema came, when we couldn't go out with Gracie, or, if we did, had to stand in shelter under shop-awnings; and of dreary Sunday nights of winter, when we went sadly up and down monkey's parade. Now, a wet evening never disturbs the youth of the town. In he goes to the cinema, for nine-penn'orth of cheer-up and a little canoodling.

But it's always the way. Directly things are made a little easier for you, along come the hard-faced to say "You shan't." When one of the many repressions and restrictions of youth is lifted, some busybody hears about it, and invents another. And now there are actually horrid old people going about the picture-

palaces, trying to order managers to keep the lights up, or, if that be impracticable, to employ someone to keep an eye on the behaviour of the audience in the cheaper seats. Damned impertinence! Happily it is ineffectual. As the young man of good family said to the magistrate, when fined and seriously admonished for untowardly behaviour on Hampstead Heath—"Your worship, you can talk and talk, and legislate and legislate, but you'll never make loving unpopular."

The cinema is at once a refuge and a playground, where the boys and the girls, despite the peepers, "get off" more quickly and more comfortably than in the High Street. During the intervals, when the lights are up, they look around, and meet an eye, inviting or challenging; and, when the lights are down again, the boy changes seats and draws nearer, and a question is hazarded:

"D'you like Wallace Reid?"

"I think I like William Hart best. I like men who do brave things."

"Seen many of Lilian Gish's pictures?"

"I see her in 'Broken Blossoms,' but I didn't like that. Too miserable, I thought. I don't like sad things. D'you come to the pictures much?"

And so on. Common ground is discovered in "Charlie," and, when his picture comes on, a hand roams in the dark and finds another hand, and fingers tighten; and there you are in the soft primrose mist, with bits of the fifth Symphony stealing through, and magic cowboys and

supernal villains and hill-top heroines casting their magnificent shadows on the white sheet and—ooh, let's get closer. That's what the cinema is for; that's its true function—a club for young lovers. The bright youth can always find company in the cinema, afternoon and evenings, though the afternoon girls are of different class—high-school, and apt to prove expensive in the matter of chocolates.

Then there are the lighting and the music of the cinema. With lights down the hall is a vault of dim colour; a sort of luminous shade, through which, from the front, the dusky faces of the audience seem to glow palely. Features are lost; one sees only something between shape and shadow, and curling cigarette smoke. That light is the correct light for the enjoyment of music. It rests the eye and refines the ear, and I wish that our concert-artists and conductors would adopt it for their recitals.

Seen at close quarters the faces are curiously placid and empty. I cannot define the state of mind of the cinema audience; I only know that it differs widely from the state of mind of the theatre audience. The theatre audience is homogeneous; it is gathered in one common bond, inspired by one impulse—the desire to see *that* play. The cinema audience may have gathered from many mixed motives. It may have come to see one of five or six pictures—to canoodle—to go to sleep—to take shelter—or to have a rest between shopping. It is vague, diffuse, without common contact. It is not indeed an audience: it is an assembly of units, each separate and enclosed in his own darkness; and,

though each unit is moved by the antics of Charlie, there is no mass spirit in the emotion or the laughter. It is not the laughter of a crowd, but some hundreds of single laughs bursting out of dark corners and knowing nothing of nor sharing the neighbouring laughs. At a theatre strangers laugh towards and in accord with each other ; but the laughter of the cinema is morbid, secret ; the damned laughter of the solitary. As an assembly it is complacent and inert, never lit by the receptive interest of the theatre audience ; and the entertainment provided confirms it in its complacence. Nothing shocks ; everything flows smoothly towards the expected end, and the music flows with it, and the young hold hands and the elders look bovine.

It is a gathering of shadows looking upon shadows, and it comes to life only when it steps from the twilight drama into the substantial streets.

. . . . . .

And yet it was this mechanical process that presented to the world the mercurial personality of Charles Chaplin, the only mime that it has yet produced ; gave him, in fact, the only medium through which he could express himself.

I wonder if I can sketch for you this rare, elusive character. . . .

A frail figure, slim-footed, and with hands as exquisite as the hands of Madame la Marquise. A mass of brindled grey hair above a face of high colour and nervous features. In conversation the pale hands flash and flutter and the eyes twinkle ; the body sways and swings, and the head darts birdlike back and forth, in time

with the soft chanting voice. His personality is as volatile as the lithe and resilient figure. He has something of Hans Andersen, of Ariel, with rumours of fairyland tears. But something more than pathos is here. Almost, I would say, he is a tragic figure. Through the international agency of the cinematograph he has achieved world fame in larger measure than any man of recent years, and he knows the weariness and emptiness that accompany excess. He is the playfellow of the world, and he is the loneliest, saddest man I ever knew.

When I first heard that Charles Spencer Chaplin wished to meet me, I was only mildly responsive. But I was assured that Charles Chaplin was "different," and finally a rendezvous was made at a flat in Bloomsbury. He *is* different. I was immediately surprised and charmed. A certain transient glamour hung about this young man to whose doings the front pages of the big newspapers were given, and for a sight of whom people of all classes were doing vigil; but, discounting that, much remained; and the shy, quiet figure that stepped from the shadow of the window was no mere film star, but a character that made an instant appeal. I received an impression of something very warm and bright and vivid. He was all radiance, but it was the radiance of fluttering firelight rather than steady sunlight. At first I think it was the pathos of his situation that made him so endearing, for he was even then being pursued by the crowd, and had taken this opportunity to get away for a quiet walk through narrow streets. But the charm remained, and remains still. It

is a part of himself that flows through every movement and every gesture. He inspires immediately, not admiration or respect, but affection ; and one gives it impulsively.

At eleven o'clock that night I took him alone for a six-hour ramble through certain districts of East London, whose dim streets made an apt setting for his dark-flamed personality. I walked him through by-ways of Hoxton, Spital-fields, Stepney, Ratcliff, Shadwell, Wapping, Isle of Dogs ; and as we walked he opened his heart, and I understood. I, too, had spent inhospitable hours of youth in these streets, and knew his feeling about them, and could, in a minor measure, appreciate what he felt in such high degree at coming back to them with his treasure of guerdons and fame. The disordered, gipsy-like beauty of this part of London moved him to ecstasy after so many years of the angular, gemlike cities of Western America, and he talked freely and well about it.

At two o'clock in the morning we rested on the kerb of an alley-way in St. George's, and he talked of his bitter youth and his loneliness and his struggles, and the ultimate bewildering triumph. Always from the day he left London he had at the back of his mind the foolish dream of a triumphal Dick Whittington return to the city whose stones were once so cold to him ; for the most philosophic temper, the most aloof from the small human passions, is not wholly free from that attitude of "a time will come when you shall hear me." Like all men who are born in exile, outside the gracious enclosures of life, he does not forget those early years ;

and even now that he has made that return it does not quite satisfy. How should it? It is worth having—that hot moment when the scoffers are dumb and recognition is accorded—the moment of attainment; but a tinge of bitterness must always accompany it. Chaplin knew, as well as all who have risen know, that the very people who were clamouring and beseeching him to their tables and receptions would not before have given him a considered glance, much less a friendly hand or a level greeting. They wanted to see, not him, but the symbol of success—*le dernier cri*—and he knew it.

He owes little enough to England. To him it was only a stony-hearted stepmother—not even the land of his birth. Here, as he told me, he was up against that social barrier that so impedes advancement and achievement—a barrier that only the very great or the very cunning can cross. America freely gave him what he could never have wrested from England—recognition and decent society. He spoke in chilly tones of his life in England as a touring vaudeville artist. Such a life is a succession of squalor and mean things. A round of intolerable struggles against the unendurable. The company was his social world, and he lived and moved only in that sterile circle. Although he had not then any achievements to his credit, he had the potentialities. Although he was then a youth with little learning, an undeveloped personality, and few graces, he had an instinctive feeling for fine things. Although he had no key by which he might escape, no title to a place among the

fresh, easy, cultivated minds where he desired to be, he knew that he did not belong in the rude station of life in which he was placed. Had he remained in this country, he would have remained in that station. He would never have got out. But in America the questions are, "What do you know?" and "What can you do?" not, "Where do you come from?" and "Who are your people?" "Are you public school?"

To-day England is ready to give him all that it formerly denied him. All doors are open to him, and he is beckoned here and there by social leaders. But he does not want them. Well might he and others who have succeeded after lean years employ to these lion-hunters the terms of a famous letter: "The notice which you have been pleased to take of my labours, had it been early had been kind; but it has been delayed till I am indifferent and cannot enjoy it . . . till I am known and do not want it." But twice during our ramble—once in Mile End Road and once in Hoxton—he was recognized, and the midnight crowd gathered and surrounded him. There, it was the real thing—not the vulgar desire of the hostess to feed the latest lion, but a burst of hearty affection, a welcome to an old friend. He has played himself into the hearts of the simple people, and they love him. The film "Charlie" is a figure that they understand, for it is a type of thwarted ambitions, of futile strivings and forlorn makeshifts for better things. As I watched the frail figure struggling against this burst of enthusiasm, in which voices hot with emotion, voices

of men and women, cried boisterous messages of goodwill to "our Charlie," I was foolishly moved. No Prime Minister could have so fired a crowd. No Prince of the House of Windsor could have commanded that wave of sheer delight. He might have had the crowd and the noise, but not the rich surge of affection. A prince is only a spectacle, a symbol of nationhood, but this was a known friend, one of themselves, and they treated him so. It was no mere instinct of the mob. They did not gather to stare at him. Each member of that crowd wanted privately to touch him, to enfold him, to thank him for cheering them up. And they could do so without reservation or compunction, for *they* could not have helped him in his early years—they were without the power. I do not attempt to explain why this one man, of all other "comics" of stage and film, has so touched the hearts of the people as to arouse this frenzy of adulation. It is beyond me. I could only stand and envy the man who had done it.

Yet he found little delight in it. Rather, he was bewildered. I think his success staggers or frightens him. Where another might be spoiled he is dazed. The "Charlie," the figure of fun that he created in a casual moment, has grown upon him like a Frankenstein monster. It and its world-wide popularity have become a burden to him. That it has not wholly crushed him, ejected his true self and taken possession of him, is proof of a strong character. Your ordinary actor is always an actor "on" and "off"; but as I walked and talked with Chaplin I found myself trying vainly to connect him,

by some gesture or attitude, with the world-famous "Charlie." There was no trace of it. When, a little later, I saw one of his films, I again tried to see through the make-up the Chaplin I had met, and again I failed. The clown of the films is purely a studio creation, having little in common with its creator; for Chaplin is not a funny man. He is a great actor of comic parts. Every second of his pictures is acted, and when he is not acting he casts off "Charlie," drops the mask of the world's fool, and his queer, glamorous personality is released again.

He described to me the first conception of his figure of fun—the poor fool, of forlorn attitudes, who would be a gentleman, and never can; who would do fine and beautiful things, and always does them in the wrong way and earns kicks in place of acceptance and approval. At every turn the world beats him, and because he cannot fight it he puts his thumb to his nose. He rescues fair damsels, and finds that they are unfair. He departs on great enterprises that crumble to rubbish at his first touch. He builds castles in the air, and they fall and crush him. He picks up diamonds, and they turn to broken glass and cut his fingers; and at the world's disdain he shrugs his shoulders and answers its scorn with rude jests and extravagant antics. He is sometimes an ignoble Don Quixote, sometimes a gallant Pistol, and in other aspects a sort of battered Pierrot, with a mordant dash of the satyr. All other figures of fun in literature and drama have associates or foils. "Charlie," in all his escapades, is alone. He is the outcast,

the exile, sometimes getting a foot within the gates, but ultimately being driven out, hopping lamely, with ill-timed nonchalance, on the damaged foot. He throws a custard pie in the world's face as a gesture of protest. He kicks policemen lest himself be kicked. There is no exuberance in the kick; it is no outburst of vitality. It is deliberate and considered. Behind every farcical gesture is a deadly intent. Never do the eyes, in his most strenuous battles with authority, lose their deep-sunken, haunting grief. Always he is the unsatisfied, venting his chagrin in a heart-broken levity of quips and capers. Chaplin realized that there is nothing more generally funny than the solemn clown, and in "Charlie" he accidentally made a world-fool; though, I think, certain memories of early youth went to its making.

But I am more interested in the man than his work. When, at four o'clock in the morning, he came home with me to Highgate and sat round the fire, I felt still more warmly his charm and still more sharply his essential discontent. I do not mean that he is miserable—he is indeed one of the merriest of companions; but he is burdened with a deep-rooted disquiet. He is the shadow-friend of millions throughout the world, and he is lonely. He is tired, too, and worn, this young man whose name and face are known in every habitable part of the world. It is not a temporary fatigue, as of a man who is overworking or running at too high a pitch. His weariness, I think, lies deeper. It is of the spirit. To the quick melancholy of the Latins—

for he is Anglo-French, and was born at Fontainebleau—is added that unrest which men miscall the artistic temperament. But even without these he could not, I think, command happiness. He is still an exile, seeking for something that the world cannot give him. It has given him much—great abilities, fame, fortune, applause; yet it has given him, for his needs, little. The irony that pursues genius has not let him escape. He is hungry for affection and friendship, and he cannot hold them. With the very charm that draws would-be friends towards him goes a perverse trick of repulsing them. He desires friendship, yet has not the capacity for it. "I am egocentric," he confessed. To children everywhere his name brings gurgles of delight; and children embarrass him. He has added one more to the great gallery of comic figures—Falstaff, Pickwick, Don Quixote, Uncle Toby, Micawber, Touchstone, Tartarin, Punchinello—and he hates "Charlie."

He sat by the fire, curled up in a corner of a deep arm-chair like a tired child, eating shortbread and drinking wine and talking, talking, talking, flashing from theme to theme with the disconcerting leaps of the cinematograph. He talked of the state of Europe, of relativity, of Benedetto Croce, of the possibility of a British Labour Government, of the fluidity of American social life, and he returned again and again to the subject of England. "It stifles me," he said. "I'm afraid of it—it's all so set and solid and *arranged*. Groups and classes. If I stayed here, I know I should go back to what I was. They told me that the war had changed

England—had washed out boundaries and dividing lines. It hasn't. It's left you even more class-conscious than before. The country's still a mass of little regiments, each moving to its own rules. You've still the County People, the 'Varsity sets, the military caste—the governing classes, and the working classes. Even your sports are still divided. For one set, there are hunting, racing, yachting, polo, shooting, golf, tennis ; and for the other cricket, football, and betting. In America, life is freer. There you can make your own life and find your place among the people who interest you."

And Chaplin has surrounded himself with quiet, pleasant people. Not his those monstrous antics of the young men and women whose empty heads have been shaken by wealth and mob worship. He is not one of the café-hotel-evening-party crowd. When the "shop" is shut, he gets well away from it and from the gum-chewing crowd to whom life is a piece of film and its prizes Great Possessions. You must see him as an unpretentious man, spending his evenings at home with a few friends and books and music. He is deeply read in philosophy, social history, and economics. His wants are simple, and, although he has a vast income, he lives on but a portion of it and shares everything with his brother Syd Chaplin. During the day he works, and works furiously, as a man works when seeking distraction or respite from his troubled inner self. What he will do next I do not know. He seems to be a man without aim or hope. What it is he wants, what he is seeking, to ensure a

little heart's ease I do not know. I don't think he knows himself. This young man worked for an end, and in a few years he achieved it, and the world now stretches emptily before him.

. . . . . .

I have here tried to present some picture of this strange, self-contradictory character; but it is a mere random sketch in outline, and gives nothing of the glittering, clustering light and shade of the original. You cannot pin him to paper. Even were he obscure, a mere nobody, without the imposed colouring of "Charlie" and world popularity, he would be a notable subject, for he has that wonderful, impalpable gift of attraction which is the greater part of Mr. Lloyd George's power. You feel his presence in a room, and are conscious of something wanting when he departs. He has the rich-hued quality of Alvan in "The Tragic Comedians." You feel that he is just the flamboyant figure that leads revolutions. You feel that he is capable of anything. And when you connect him with "Charlie" the puzzle grows, and you give it up. The ambition that served and guided him for ten years is satisfied; but he is still unsatisfied. The world has discovered him, but he has not yet found himself. But he has discovered the weariness of repeated emotion, and he is a man who lives on and by his emotions.

"BLIMEY!" said the Duchess, "this asparagus is all right."

Years ago, when I first heard of this opening of a realistic Society serial, I followed the custom of royalty and "laughed heartily." But now it isn't so funny; the incongruity isn't so marked. Since then I have heard a Duchess swear, and met a Duke whose table manners were really odious. Yes, I have moved a little in the streets of rich men, among the demi-repingtons; but I was always glad to get out again, back to civilization.

Mayfair and St. James are a little depressing to the sanguine. They have nothing to say, and they don't say it. They don't *have* to say it. There they are, aloof and self-sufficient; there is nothing to be said; and their most emphatic gesture is a languid glance backward at history and tradition. Pall Mall, I think, is the saddest street in London. It has nothing to break its grievous monotony. It is the street of old men—distant in every sense from the street of beautiful children. It is worn and grey. It is sober and severe. Its face is set in heavy lines, and its mood is set. It is the England that makes laws and makes wars; the England that fears Bolshevism; the England that writes to the *Times;* recreant, forbidding

England, glowering at youth and the new spirit and the new system. There is nothing meaner than the charity of these people; nothing poorer than their riches; nothing sadder than their rejoicings.

Why the rich Englishman, the most unclubbable of men, joins a club, I don't know. But his clubs reflect his spirit very clearly. They partake of the atmosphere of the church vestry and the public library and the railway waiting-room. Men sit about, not comfortably, but as men sit when waiting for some occasion—the arrival of a train or the entry of the Chairman. They look as though they would be glad if something happened—anything—so long as it eased the tension. They *H'm* and they *G'nrr*, and they nod to one another; and they move with serious mien and obviously first-class carriage. I have not often seen an Englishman bored in his own home; but every Englishman in a club has an air of boredom at breaking-point.

Yet, even in this street of the sedate mood, I have had adventures. Even the cool sleek world of the rich sometimes throws up the quaint occasion. . . .

The only man I know who belongs to a West End club asked me the other night if I would dine with him at the Athenæum upon a certain evening. I said I would, and to the Athenæum I went, a little abashed and a little fluttered at the prospect of sitting as a guest in that august institution.

Its cloistral calm is one of the beauties of London. As I stood in its great hall, after

giving my name to a retainer of the nobility, I felt a little depressed and conscious of my shapeless clothes. I noticed other shabby and down-at-heel fellows moving about the hall—members of the staff, I supposed. Through a glass door I perceived many gleaming heads bowed over newspapers and reviews. Very noble they looked, very grave, very rich in the spirit of Debrett and of mellow English landscapes. And then the old retainer stopped one of the unkempt figures in the hall and addressed him as Sir Charles; and then I was shown into the smoking-room; and I saw with something of relief that all its occupants were as shabby as myself. I don't know why this relaxed my feeling, but it did. I felt I could talk to any of them. Some of them I recognised from published portraits—a playwright, a critic, a scientist, an authority on Tudor literature, a philosopher—just ordinary people. And when I had been among them some few minutes I recognised how well their shabbiness suited both themselves and the spirit of the club. Its atmosphere is a sort of animated hush, and that seemed to be the note of the company. Although the architectural scheme of the hall is a little ornate, the place itself is governed by a stately simplicity. Its dining-room is simple, and its kitchen makes no attempt at attracting remark to itself. Fearful as I was at my first visit to the Athenæum, I feel now, after several visits, that it is the most serene and easy club in London.

But how different the club to which my friend now conducted me! Melbourne Inman, he said, was giving a display at his "other" club,

and we would go there. His other club was the Marlborough, and in ten minutes I found myself among a group of exquisites in full evening toilet, all alert, calm and clean, standing or pacing in graceful but ready attendance upon the dinner-gong. The Marlborough is a small club, neither august nor splendid. Its apartments are such as its members would have in their own homes. There is nothing obtrusive and nothing wanting. But the "note" is richer and deeper than the note of the Athenæum; more set; more of the solid rich earth of the English shires than of the fluency of speculative thought. Its atmosphere is suave and steady, and never wind blows loudly. In this domain it is always afternoon.

Earls and Barons paced around me. They lounged or pottered. Oh, beautifully they lounged! Decidedly I was among the People and the Accent. How elegantly they carried their clothes! How beautifully their beautiful manner *wasn't* apparent. How perfectly their shirt-fronts rested upon their noble chests, and their coats upon their shoulders: none of those little gaps or sticking-out bits that you and I experience. How courtier-like were these members of King Edward's Club—so that you could never have placed them as courtiers or as anything but idle men. How patly each resembled the other in gesture, poise, and movement. How skilfully they didn't express anything. I had expected to find them "talking passionately about the laws in a low undertone," but the little talk I heard was the talk you may hear in

any suburban railway carriage. They bartered with one another inane quotations from the newspapers. They——

Then I knew something had happened. There was a stir, a breath, as it were, sweeping slowly through the untroubled air of that room; a freshening of the atmosphere as though a window had been opened in a parlour.

Melbourne Inman had arrived.

A personality had entered, and had blotted out the exquisite negligibles; and its vibrations went through and through the Marlborough Club. From Earls and Barons and Viscounts, and the fine flower of our English fields, he *stood out;* a piece of behaviour of which no courtier would be guilty. But he didn't mean to do it, I'm sure. He looked flushed and flurried. He walked with ungainly steps. He didn't seem quite comfortable in this galley. He looked as uncomfortable as I felt I looked, and I sent him a thought-wave of sympathy at finding another soul not at ease in this temple of Zion. But perhaps he wasn't uncomfortable; he must be used to such doings; perhaps he was only bored.

But certainly he looked shy, spoke very quietly, and, at dinner, did little but smile and agree with the gracious company that attended and deferred to him. But how he effaced them all! At the guests' table were five others; but there was only one that drew the eye, and that the smallest, least impressive of them. That table in a quiet corner was the centre of the room, and a stranger entering would instinctively have looked first at that party. Mean-

while Inman ate and beamed and murmured Yes or No, looking up only at intervals.

But in the billiards room, what a change. His diffident manner he threw away with his coat. He beamed no more. His face set in quiet lines. And when he drew his cue from his case it was as though he drew a sword and assumed a pose that made these others but sorry creatures. The moment it was in his hands the air of championship rayed out from him. Here was the craftsman among his materials, forgetful of the occasion, forgetful of courtiers and kings. He seemed to banish his hosts from his radius ; they were not there. The crowd poured down and stood with intent eyes watching his preparations, and he had not even a glance for them. He was bursting with Inmanity. The room was clogged with Inman and billiards table.

With magnificent gesture he stretched his cue and chalked it. With the manner of a master he examined the balls. If only those inept folk who are called upon to perform the solemn rite of laying a foundation stone or launching a ship, or unveiling a statue—which is usually fumbled, with a miserable compromise between the reverent and the casual, the aloof and the intimate—if only these people had a touch of the true greatness of Inman or Irving or W. G. Grace or General Booth ! With half-closed eyelids he stood waiting for his opponent—the crack player of the Club. Then he went to the table with something of the brilliant aplomb of the fire-engine.

The match began. Five hundred up. Fuller and fuller did Inman grow. Under the brilliant

light one saw a ruddy, strained face, taut mouth; the eyes heavy. Whatever expression it held lay about the prominent eyebrows. For the rest one saw only a pair of arms and stout but sensitive hands. He moved round the table with quick short steps, ungracefully; but clearly deportment didn't interest him. Otherwise, his feet would have been as lithe as his hands.

It was an exhibition match, and he exhibited. Every movement had a smack and relish of its own. He accomplished things that, I think, he would never have attempted in a match; impossible things, it seemed to me, against all the laws of angles. He seemed to be above those laws. He seemed to be master of the balls, and to send them about his business as he would. It was devilment—a white ball streaming across green cloth to go here, there, back, across, at the lightest touch of the wizard's wand. It thrilled me as, I fancy, folk were thrilled by Paganini's devilish mastery of the fiddle.

When, at some great burst of applause, he turned in acknowledgment, with what nice sense he did it. With what exquisite poise he assumed and twitched the native mantle of those courtiers. And how deliciously he missed and flummuxed, so that his opponent should have a chance at the table; and then retired to the shadow and sat motionless, eyes on the table, seeming to freeze the balls where they lay.

Oh, pretty fellow!

. . . . . .

But that wasn't my only adventure in the streets of rich men. I have done other wonderful things. I have even lunched in Berkeley

Square. Yes, I have. That in itself is an adventure, but at the lunch I made the acquaintance of Solomon, the pianist, and a secret fealty was sworn between us over a mutual delight in fried potatoes.

Solomon is an arresting personality, and his taste for fried potatoes is not out of character, for he was born in London, well within sound of Bow Bells, and belongs to several generations of Londoners. He is our only Cockney pianist. My first meeting with him in Berkeley Square left me with an impression of moonlight, and a desire to see him outside Berkeley Square in daylight. Since then we have had many talks and meetings, but the first impression remains. His dark head, the dark eyes flashing with sombre tints, like water at midnight, the dark colour, and the deep voice that seldom rises above a murmur, all suggested night ; but it is night lit by the clear high spirit of youth that hovers about him and is seen in the twinkling lips and in his attitudes and gestures.

You have not been five minutes in his company before you discover that he has heights and depths.

He is a wonder, and everybody wonders at him. I think he wonders at himself. He gives no sign of it, but his very seriousness implies a consciousness of gifts which must be carefully guarded and used only to the highest purpose. Many, no doubt, will remember him as a little boy of ten, in the usual velvet suit of the prodigy—a tiny figure that could hardly be distinguished from the great piano on the great platform of that great Coliseum—the Albert

Hall. He was eight years old when he first appeared as a soloist and people wondered then at the prodigious technique and temperament of this solemn elf. But at the age of twelve he disappeared, and it was assumed that he had gone the way of all prodigies, and would be heard of no more.

They were wrong, and I think his appearances as an adult pianist have shown that he was no mere season's sensation. What happened was that a group of people recognized the boy's ability, and interested themselves in his career ; for Solomon was born with genius only, and the silver spoon was missing. They knew that if he were kept at work throughout adolescence he would become stale, and his growing genius would be thwarted and perhaps killed. In 1916, therefore, Percy Colson, the composer, formed a small committee of music lovers, who made it their business to take him off the public platform and to control his musical education. The committee sent him to the Continent, and there he remained for six years studying under Duprey and Cortot ; and he was not permitted to make a public appearance until his tutors and guardians were fully satisfied with him. As yet he has not arrived, but I think he will, for he has passion and imagination and when these are under the control of technique he will surely fulfil Cortot's expectations of him.

With all his temperament, which he reserves exclusively for his work, and with all his devotion to his work, he is a happy human boy. He is still "Solomon." He was born with another name, but he wishes to be known only by his

first name. He is still in his 'teens, and loves all the things that most appeal to that age. Next to his piano he loves his push-bike ; and two great delights are the Palladium music hall and fried potatoes. If he is not in the mood, you cannot get him to talk of music, or of his new feelings about a hackneyed passage of Schumann or Brahms ; but he will talk for half an hour of Harry Weldon, Billy Merson, and Charles Austin ; and, when you would have him at the piano, he will offer you a dish of fried potatoes.

Restful and serene in manner, he arrests attention at first glance. Although quiet and reticent, he has not a trace of the melancholy that sometimes goes with youthful genius. "He has eyes of youth ; he speaks April and May."

It is my fervent hope that he will not fall, as so many musicians do fall, into those places that are as the plague to the artist, and quickly destroy him. I mean society drawing-rooms and the streets of rich men. But I think he has too deep and Heinesque a sense of humour to permit himself to be lionized. I think that, where another might be found at Lady Dinkum's reception, Solomon will be found in the grand circle at the Palladium, or buying bananas in Little Newport Street, or eating fried potatoes at a street corner.

. . . . . .

There is in the West End little character of the sort one finds in the humbler streets ; no downright, deeply lined, twisted, bitten-in character. The people who live in these parts are trained to keep in check any little idiosyn-

crasies that mark them from their fellows, and the side-streets of Piccadilly offer nothing of fantasy or flamboyance. But here and there, among the workers of these side-streets, you do happen upon whimsical water-colour character, laid, as it were, upon superfine deckle-edged paper; and in the old mews of Mayfair many hard-up people have found lodging. These mews, which once sheltered the horses, carriages and grooms of the rich, are useless as garages, and some of them have lately been converted into dwellings and studios. In Apple Tree Yard lives William Nicholson; and W. H. Davies, the poet, has renounced the broad highways of the country for an elegant postal address. You will find him in a true poet's garret off Brook Street, and you will meet him most mornings in Bond Street, and will wonder what he is doing there, among elegant men and their groomed trollops. The cuckoo has been heard in Hyde Park; people have written to the papers about it; but the thrush in Bond Street is a matter more marvellous and serious. Had Davies settled in Runcorn or Oldham or Ashton-in-Makerfield, the news would have saddened us but not perplexed us. But Davies in Bond Street is Wrong, as Wrong as a Bond Street lady in the cowshed. Yet it is pleasant to meet him there; to find one touch of true grace in this vapid street. He plods along with stick and pipe, a short figure, with face upturned, always upturned, the large brown eyes settled serenely upon things more durable than gold-tipped cigarettes and hand-bags. He brings to this street of ignoble dignities a breath of old

brotherhood with the simplicities. He sends a note of Mozartian song across this musical-comedy stage.

More in the key of the West End was that newsagent of Duke Street, Mr. Bottom. He was a Midsummer Night's Dream child. He was a half-brother to Davy Stephens of Dublin. He respected nobody and his attitude was fully licensed. When he was a newsagent he wrote his own news-bills, facetiously, in chalk, on two large slates hung outside his shops. Each bill dug into the private life of some local friend or celebrity. Thus :

Scene in Piccadilly
Dr. Dustin Backs a Winner

Crisis in the West
Mr. Ellis goes Home Early

The Second Advent
Mr. Chaplin Arrives at the Ritz

On any morning walk about Piccadilly you were sure to meet Bottom, and his airy salutation would brighten the worst of days—and wet days are more disheartening in Piccadilly than in any other street. But, for a lesson in heartiness and uplift, you should make the acquaintance of Mr. Proops. He is most useful on those days when you have no money and no hope. He won't lend you any money, but he will send you away with the sense that the year's at the Spring and all's right with the world. You are strolling aimlessly along that section of Piccadilly where are Hatchard's, Fortnum & Mason's, Hatchett's, Sotheran's, Bond

Street and the Ritz. Suddenly, somebody stops, head thrown back in surprise and gratification. A hand shoots towards you :

" Ha ! Well, well, well. Let me shake you by the hand, my good and honest friend. The first true man I have seen this week. Does the world wag its tail at you ? In other words, good brother, did you back All Over yesterday, or not ? No ? Well, well, well ! "

Proops is a sort of Bardolph, strutting always, whether he is in funds or without a bean. He wears his panache for the world's amusement, and he can approach you with the air of lending you money, and leave you his creditor. Only the West End produces that kind of man.

The figure I most like to meet in the West is a figure that is only to be seen during the London season ; the figure of Frank Crowninshield, editor of New York's debonair monthly, "Vanity Fair." The post fits him. The casual reader of the magazine, visualising idly its editor, would visualise just such a personality as Frank Crowninshield. One would say that he was created by Mr. Beerbohm. His rich, yet delicate character belongs to the deckle-edged pages of Max Gay, disarmingly cynical ; yet, impulsive and warm as the South, and as piquant as the South-East, he baffles the interpreter. And I have a fancy that he means to baffle you. That is the way of the decorative character ; he decorates so that the common people shall not invade and disturb the true self. Crowninshield is wholly modern, but he imposes upon his modernity the dash and charm of the cavalier which glitter in his very name. He loves the

arts and the graces, but I think he loves life more. Wherever the movement is, there is Crowninshield. He lights up his circle and sets it flaming and flickering, while he himself remains serene and steady. He rides on the whirlwind and directs the storm. That is the secret of the good Prime Minister and the good Editor. Crowninshield has it in large measure. It is difficult to decorate a rococo street like Piccadilly, but Crowninshield does decorate it—and stimulate it. His tall swaying figure, his manner, his smile, and his delight at seeing *you* out of all London's millions, at once hearten and soothe your nerves. He is champagne and cigar in one.

One of my adventures into the streets of rich men stands out very clearly. This was a visit to Claridge's. Claridge's is the hotel of the Complete Rich. It is a sort of semi-public Athenæum—serene, aloof, exclusive. There is little movement in its main hall; none of the diligent or subdued bustle of other hotels. Everything goes on wheels, and the wheels are cased in velvet. I imagine it is something like the reception rooms of Buckingham Palace. Certainly it is full of traps for the inexperienced. The worst trap of all lies in this—there are no uniforms at Claridge's; and if you don't know that (I didn't) you may easily blister your self-respect for a whole week. For fifteen minutes I hung about that hall in the company of agreeable and apparently idle young gentlemen in elegant morning dress, before one of them rescued me and showed me to the lift. Even if you know that these young gentlemen are attendants,

there's always the risk of addressing the one who isn't (these foreign princes who stay at Claridge's are not always dressed by Savile Row). You have to take your chance, as, at Madame Tussaud's, you offer your sixpence to the programme girl, and take your chance whether it's a dummy.

Happily I got through without any bloomers, and was shown to the guest I had gone to see—Mr. Isidore de Lara. Here is another deckle-edged figure. His figure is short, but it carries a head of the kind called leonine, with an ample iron-grey mane. His suave and genial manner suits his head. He has the English repose, but one is sensible now and then of a dash of the Latin. It leaps from his eyes and from the quick inflections of the voice. Why the composer of "Messaline" should have chosen to set a rag-tag London song of mine, I don't know. But he had so chosen, and I went to Claridge's to hear his setting tried over. I have suggested the atmosphere of Claridge's. I now give you the first verse of that song:

He was a bad glad sailor-man.
  Tan-tan-ta-ran-tan-tare-o!
You never could find a haler man.
  Tan-tan-ta-ran-tare!
All human wickedness he knew
From Millwall Docks to Pi-chi-lu.
He loved all things that make us gay—
He'd spit his juice ten yards away,
  And roundly he'd declare—O!
"It isn't so much that I want yer beer
As yer bloody good company!
  Whrow-ow-Whrow!
Bloody good companee!
  Wow!

And now, please, imagine a pink-and-white bedroom at Claridge's; Isidore de Lara, grey and bland, at the piano; myself standing over him; and the two of us shouting that song, with gusto on the "Wows" and the epithet. . . . Four times that song rang through the green velvet corridors. Four times did sacrilege persist. Princes, diplomats, runaway princesses, exiled monarchs, financiers, courtiers, and other truly great folk have sought refuge at Claridge's, appreciating its chastity and repose. I like to think that I was in part responsible for what I may call the Rape of Claridge's. Whether Mr. de Lara heard about it afterwards, I don't know. Probably not. Claridge's, I think, would have difficulty in framing a complaint against such disorder. There are some things, you know. . . . Well, what could Buckingham Palace do if somebody got Sam Mayo with one of his songs into a Drawing Room?

. . . . . .

A year ago come Valentine's Day I was taken, for the first time, to see one of the sights of London. I was taken to the House of Commons. The House is one of those places to which the Cockney never goes. Others are the Tower, St. Paul's, the British Museum, Madame Tussaud's, the National Gallery, the Abbey, and the Crystal Palace. I wouldn't have gone then, but for a wet night. But in the middle of a fair afternoon rain came down a little too heavily for comfort, and, as neither Monk nor I had money for theatres, cinemas, restaurants or other public shelters, Monk said "Let's go to the House. I can always get in there."

So we went to the House, I with a sense of high adventure. Everything Once is my motto. I was going to note the very heart-throbs of this England of ours. I was going to see for the first time the Mother of all Parliaments. I was going to see mighty minds in labour, and to assist in the bringing-forth of world-ideas. I was going to see the essence of my country, to gaze upon those few, chosen from the millions of our populace, who mould a mighty state's decrees and shape the whisper of a throne. I was going to——

Then Monk said "Sh!" and I subdued myself to the tone proper to such an occasion. Might, majesty, dominion and power were to be manifested. I entered the halls with the suitable mien and gait, something between the style of a Bishop at the altar and a Cabinet Minister kissing hands. I stepped reverently yet sturdily. I doffed my hat. I saluted the soul of England with head erect. I entered the House of Commons.

And all my soul-preparation was wasted. I need not have gone through those motions at all. I had thought I was attending a Council of the Elders of the Greatest Nation of the Earth. Nothing like it. I was actually attending the Greatest Show on Earth. Many theatrical and circus-managers have made that extravagant claim for their shows, but there's only one proof of it, and that is the queue at the box-office. And the House of Commons has them all beaten. Weather and circumstance, hard times, good times, serious times, trivial times, good turns, bad turns—these make no difference to the

ticket-office of the House. Theatres and cinemas may complain of the slump, and assign varying causes to it—the times, the fine weather, the increasing critical faculty of the public—but the House is untouched by these things. Matinee or evening, always there's a queue lined up in the Lobby ; and, if you get there a few minutes after time, the House is full, and you have to wait your turn. When the theatres and the cinemas can't fill one-tenth of their seats, this House is turning people away nightly.

And the crowd is justified. The House puts up a good show. It is the best variety-house in the country, and, like the police court, it is free. Even its dud turns don't empty the seats. They may empty the Members' benches, but the public eat up every bit of the show, and find it all good ; and, when the Hon. Member for Mutton-in-the-Marsh rises to promote a Bill for the provision of tramways at Mutton, the gallery crowd leans a bit further over the rail and settles down. "Sh! This is going to be good!" Talk about Chu Chin Chow and its record run. Here's a show that has been playing for centuries and still draws a full house.

We were received in the outer hall by a policeman. He passed us on to another policeman, who showed us to another policeman, who told us to sit down. I had never seen so many policemen in any East End highway as here. After a wait of some minutes in the picture gallery we were beckoned forward and taken through the Lobby and upstairs. Here at the top of the stairs sat a personage in evening dress, decorated with a medal. Before him was a

mighty book, in which he bade us write our names. Then still more policemen ushered us to the Gallery, and there before me I saw the Great Assembly in full business.

I found myself in a chamber of ecclesiastical type, without windows or lighting fixtures, lighted artificially from the top. The air was musty, like church or theatre air, and the atmosphere of hush that held the gallery made me tread lightly as one entering during the psalms or after the curtain is up. The seats in the gallery are of that hard wood which serves for church pews. The House was full, and I looked down upon a hundred bald heads, which bobbed up and down like little balloons. Fat men wandered in. Fat men wandered out. Fat men went to sleep. And over all was bzz-bzz, *burble-burble*, broken now and then by a broad murmur "Yoah-hoah-hoah!" At once my mind went back to my first play—"The Sign of the Cross." It was just the noise of the roaring of the lions "off" by hungry supers; but here, I was told, it signified approval, not hunger or challenge. Then I looked about me.

Centre of all sat, on a sort of throne, an imposing personage in wig and gown. Before him, at a table, sat three gentlemen in less elaborate wigs, and at either side of him, assisting the theatre-illusion, stood two elegant figures in evening dress, as Commère and Compère stand at either side of the stage in revue. I had expected the Mother of all Parliaments to show an example of the highest in all things, but, except in the fun, I was disappointed. The crowd was a crowd of ordinary people, ill-dressed

but well-fed ; just the kind of people one goes home with in the tram or the bus, only fatter. The clothes, style and speech were all provincial, and the atmosphere, full of the tun-bellied John Bullishness of the cartoons, was no more metropolitan than the atmosphere of the Regent Palace Hotel. I had imagined it to be charged nightly with dignity, passion, rivalry, scorn, rancour and indignation. I found that its tone was more casual than the tone of the Wandsworth Borough Council, and the whole proceedings were taken with a note of levity that is too seldom found in our theatres. It was an assembly of bland heads, bland voices, and bland philosophy ; of men of education without knowledge and men of knowledge without education ; of inept creatures honestly doing their sorry best to serve their fellows. And above them, in the Press Gallery, the gods laughed.

The bewigged gentleman in the high chair seemed at first to have some air of solemnity, of inflexible purpose and austerity ; but, when he raised his head, one saw the face of an ordinary man thoroughly enjoying himself. His eyes twinkled at the pert replies of Ministers or the impertinent interjections of refractory Members; and he joined with shaking shoulders in the laughter that greeted the funny bits of the star turns. Clearly he enjoyed it as much as I did ; and he saw it every night. Anyway, his is an amusing job ; for it is his nod and beck that sets those little balloons dancing up and down. It was question time when we entered, and the fun was kept up by both sides.

The gentleman in the wig called upon "Hon' ble Member for Mutton."

Bald head rises: "Number eighty-four to Minister of Health."

Gentleman with bald head and hook nose gets up. "Nyah, nyah."

Another bald head: "Mis'r Sp'kr, Sir, arising out of that answer——"

"Order, order!"

Again like a show, all the points of this question-and-answer business are prearranged. I had thought, like the child at the variety show, that the varieties just happened. But it isn't so. Questions are written down and printed on the ordinary paper, and sent to Cabinet Ministers, who send them to their Departments. The Departments write replies and give them to the Cabinet Minister. Question and answer are printed and circulated in the daily issue of Hansard. Yet every day Hon. Members make these questions verbally in the House, and Cabinet Ministers answer them verbally. There is nothing haphazard here. All is rehearsed and calculated. There are no spontaneous speeches, no unrehearsed "scenes." All speeches are really lectures, readings of "papers," and all the movements of debate are like the movements of a ballet—only less passionate.

After question-time there came an interval, and half the Members trooped out. The gentleman in the wig rose and announced the next item, and called upon the Hon. Member for Trumpington. I had heard about him. He was always speaking somewhere and getting into the papers with little aphorisms in those columns

headed Wise Words of the Week. Decidedly a son of Anak. Then he stood up—a little fellow, with baggy trousers, mottled face, wandering eye, and butcher's stomach. I had read some of his speeches, and they read well. Now I was granted the spectacle of fretting pomp in its natural state. It was difficult to believe that the man was serious. It was difficult to believe that this was not some cunning revue actor giving an impression of a solemn ass. I had thought in my innocence, though I ought to have known better, that the speeches I read were delivered as they were printed—hot from the heart, clear-cut, sentence following sentence, smooth and straight. One reads something like this :

> "When people ask us to see signs of failure in the present association of parties, I absolutely challenge the statement that has been made of failure. The man is mad who would say that any Minister of the Government would not lay aside his burden with a sigh of relief. Is there any man who would say that any member of the Government, for his own enjoyment, ambition, or emolument, is desirous of clinging to office and dealing with such problems as Ireland, Egypt, India, the financial situation, and the spectre of 2,000,000 men idle in our streets ? "

This is how it is done. "Mis'r Sp'kr, Sir—(jerk at coat) When people ask us (glance round House), ask us to see signs of failure (prrhm !) in the present association of parties (snuffle), I absolutely—er—absolutely challenge

the statement that has been made (prrhm !) of failure. (Pause.) I say that that man is mad—er—mad, who would say (business with waistcoat button) that any member of the Government would not (fumble among papers) would not lay aside his burden with a sigh of relief. Of relief. Is there any man—any man—who would say (fumble) "—and so on.

When he had finished, another bald head got up, and talked copy-book maxims to twenty other men who were not listening. Weary platitudes splashed into the thick khaki light. It is a light that withers all inspiration and all nobility.

Even my friend Mr. Gore and his collateral branches, who make up the majority of the House, are sane in the sun.

Mr. Gore, if you don't know him, is the fount of all wisdom, the maker of all proverbs, the progenitor of all platitudes. Out of his mouth proceeds desiccated truth. It was he, I am sure, who wrote those gemmy aphorisms that disfigured Vere Foster's copy-books in my young days. He is as didactic as Euclid ; and as right—damn him. It is his observant and ruminant mind that notes that a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush ; and tells you so. He discovers each morning some new truth ; as that money doesn't bring happiness ; that his dog is wonderfully intelligent ; that you can have too much of a good thing ; that it's a funny world ; that the Pacific Ocean is very wide ; that wonders never cease ; that South Sea islands are lonely places : that the evenings are drawing in, and that we shall soon have

Christmas here. But where Euclid, when he said a thing, said it once and left it, Mr. Gore reiterates incessantly. What he discovered on Monday he discovers anew on Thursday. He does not, like most of us who repeat platitudes, employ the disclaiming "Well, they say that" as a prelude to his pronouncements. He claims them as his own, with "I was thinking this morning . . ." or "I always think . . ."

He lies in bed at night and early morning thinking, thinking, happening at times upon the golden thought for the day, which he forthwith proclaims wherever he goes. And he goes everywhere. You will meet him in the Strand, in the suburbs, in the East End, in the Tube, at Mayfair dinner tables, in the pleasure resorts, in Egypt, Algiers, Morocco, Italy, the Norwegian Fiords, on all the cross-Atlantic and P. & O. liners, among the rich, among the poor, in first and third-class railway carriages, at Monte Carlo, at Vestry Meetings, and certainly in the House of Commons. And, wherever you find him, he will be disseminating the results of his midnight cogitations. Whenever you hear his voice saying "It always seems to me . . ." fly from him even if you are his guest at dinner; for that means that he is about to read Vere Foster's copy-books aloud. But, fly where you will, he is certain to find you at last. When I made my first trip abroad to France, to a small town in the department of Eure, sure enough he was there. I alighted at a wayside station in that department, and he was on the platform, with a woman—probably Mrs. Gore; he is always uxorious. He was nursing a dog, and

the first words I heard in my first foreign town were not French dialect but Vere Foster's English :

"Ah," stroking the dog and sighing, "ah, I don't suppose we shall ever have another Landseer."

Mr. Gore takes his tastes and his hobbies seriously. He is no mere enthusiast ; he is a zealot. He does not, like the rest of us, follow a recreation for fun ; he "believes in it." He believes in fresh air. He believes in outdoor exercise. He does not take cold baths because he enjoys them but because he believes in them. His faith in material manifestations is large and complete. He may be spiritually a sceptic but he has a simple faith in the efficacy of flannel next the skin, of hot rum for colds, of reading as a means of self-improvement, of attending dinners as a means of social advancement. Joy is absent from him. All those grand foolish moments which are to others life itself he suffers in the cause of the faith. Where others accept and rejoice, he believes. He believes in India, he believes in Ireland. A festive season is to him a service to be attended, an office of his much too common prayer-book.

He annunciates the indisputable. He unnerves us with his incessant affirmations.

And his true home is the House of Commons ; and, while in small intimate doses he is an irritation, in the mass he is a stimulant, an insane entertainment. His turn alone makes the House a rival to other houses.

"Now, Sir, we have been passing through serious times ; but, though the road uphill is

hard, when we reach the top we see the first faint streaks of the dawn. (Hear-hear, Hear-hear !)

"And now, Sir, I have nothing to add but this : if we face our opponents singly, we shall be defeated. Let us show them a united front ; for Union is Strength. (Hear-hear, Hear-hear, Hear-hear !)

"And I venture to say, Sir, that nobody but a Socialist would advocate the control of capital." (Hear-hear, Hear-hear !)

And so the flummery went on ; and I was reminded more and more of the business that I had seen in "African Villages" at Earl's Court and other exhibitions ; native pow-pows and war-councils. I once thought that Gilbert's "Mikado" poked fun at Japanese court ceremonial, but I see now that he was more subtle ; his satire was really directed at English parliamentary ceremonial. All the hirelings of the House have their own resounding titles of barbaric tone—Black Rod, Serjeant-at-Arms, and so on. We send colonists and missionaries to Africa, and do our best to stamp out the rites and ceremonies of the natives, their beads and coloured glass and enemies' teeth and skulls, while all the time the war-paint, the head-dress, the incantation and voodoo business continue in our own councils. And I am all for their survival both in the South Seas and in Westminster. For we all love flummery and mumbo-jumbo. That is why we go to the theatre and the Lord Mayor's Show and Royal Weddings. That is why the House is such a draw. I regret my shillings spent on those "African Villages," and I think

Mr. Kiralfy might have told me that I could see a similar show for nothing.

Then things began to move a bit. Everybody went out—in a slow-moving bunch : a parade of wooden soldiers. For some minutes the House was empty. Then they all came back, and there were smiles and murmurs and growls. Then the man in the wig rose and said something, and immediately a little man with bobbed hair got up, and there were gentle roars of "Yoah-yoah-yoah!" Clearly Big-Man-of-Wigwam was about to speak. He spoke. Quietly and slowly at first. Then it seemed he Got Nasty ; and while some murmured "Yoah-yoah!" others, a large number, growled. That roused him. He turned about and snapped at them. His bobbed hair bobbed up and down. He yoicked. He *hwlled*. He waved his little arms about. He brought a hand down with a smack on the table. He pointed a finger at a man opposite, a knife-faced man with simian eyebrows, and told him, with an air of blasting him where he sat, that his conduct was un-English. The other didn't seem at all dismayed. Big Man went on, getting more and more angry. At any moment, I felt, he would vault that table and cross-buttock the sneerer. He dropped his Big-Man manner, and gave a perfect imitation of a mean-mouthed schoolboy ; no grand remonstrance, but a petty snarling and yapping. This set the others at it. They called each other names. They turned round to each other like boys when the master's out of the room. They jeered, derided, gestured, and "Order!"-ed each other. They gave a display that would not

be tolerated for a moment at the Muswell Hill Local Parliament. But they gave us our money's worth. It was the English mob-spirit made manifest.

Then, as it began, it stopped. Big-Man simmered down, flourished a few more phrases, and sat down amid Yoah-yoahs from the faithful.

Other little men bobbed up, but only one was allowed to remain standing. The others sat down, while he addressed the House. When he sat down, the disappointed ones bobbed up again. No Luck. Down they sat again. Fat men wandered in. Fat men wandered out. Fat men went to sleep.

And over all was *bzz-bzz, burble-burble.*

In the Streets of the Simple

My tenement days belong to Spitalfields, and I have a deep affection for Spitalfields. It is a queer corner. It has not one note, but many. Its main street is Commercial Street, a lane of angry architecture. It mixes industry with vagrancy. It is a land of warehouses and doss-houses and dwellings. It has a vegetable market and a gravely beautiful church, and it is overshadowed by a great Goods Station and its many arches; these things endue it with a baffling quality of charm. Its nights are dim, and its days strenuous, but it wants passion. Just as the reclaimed criminal is usually a vapid, aimless creature, so Spitalfields, once hot and bright with wickedness, is now pallid and lethargic. It has the dim melancholy of Russian cigarettes. Its only noise and movement come from the Jews lounging at the corners, for this ardent race even lounges vivaciously.

But, if it is not what it was, it still holds in its streets much of wistful interest; and Coverley Fields, Fashion Street, Flower and Dean Street, the Tenters, Weaver Street, and the faint-smelling Slavonic shops up the alleys still send us whiffs of sad enchantment. For here are gathered colonies of the strangely assorted races of the Balkans—Poles, Lithuanians, Czecho-Slovakians, Albanians, Georgians, Serbs, Rou-

manians, Esthonians ; many of them refugees of 1914 who have settled here, quite comfortably, yet daily fill the air with exiles' yearn. For them the shops are filled with strange merchandise, and for them the horseflesh butchers trade, and the bakers make the queer-shaped bread.

But my tenement stands above and outside this exotic influence, and is wholly English ; and in penurious days I had good times there with the other tenants. It is a hideous affair to look upon. It is of the Peabody school of architecture—a school that has many followers. Its chief lesson is the elimination of beauty. These buildings are for the poor ; therefore, they need only be serviceable ; and their builders spend a thousand pounds upon rough utility and begrudge tuppence for beauty. Look upon our Elementary Schools, our Public Baths, our workhouses, our orphanages, our infirmaries, our "dwellings," and compare them with the dignity of our Stores and banks and business offices. They are sores on the face of London. The lives of the poor are ugly enough by circumstance ; their benefactors seem determined to keep them bound in ugliness.

But the tenement folk manage, somehow, to triumph over the ugliness of Peabody, and to soften its crude angles by kindliness and self-help. I don't know how it is, but tenement families are much more agreeable than next-door neighbours of house and flat. The tenement, indeed, is one big house, except—there is an "except" in every tenement—except for "that stuck-up thing," Miss Simpkins on the

third floor, who makes a passion of reserve, and won't join in any of the occasions.

You may live twelve months in a mansion flat, and know nothing of your fellow-tenants, or they of you ; but in a tenement the social atmosphere is more cordial ; you are expected to be "neighbourly." On your arrival you are the new boy or the new girl at school, or the new member, and you are to be looked over, and to give an account of yourself and to be reported upon ; so that, if you are passed, you may be made free of the tenement society. Ours was one happy family. We were as self-contained and as self-supporting as Queen Anne's Mansions. We had not a restaurant, but we had a tailor, a cobbler, a medical student, a charlady who "did" for the student and did odd jobs for a few pence for harassed mothers ; a good cook who for equally few pence would cook a family dinner, a newsboy, a Salvation Army lass for spiritual consolation, and a caretaker who made a book on all the important races. There were by-laws, of course—no music or singing after ten o'clock, no disorder (a most elastic term) and no nuisances. But we didn't need those rules ; give-and-take was part of our nature.

You live as much in others' rooms as in your own ; and, if it should become known that any tenant is hard hit and short of a Sunday dinner, there's always a place for him at the tables of those who are, for the moment, flush. And there are delightful Christmas parties and Bank Holiday parties ; and much chagrin if you go to Mrs. Jones's party and don't drop in at Mrs. Smith's party. To each floor of the tenement

is given a balcony space where washing is hung during the day, where the old ladies sit on warm afternoons, and where youth lounges in the evening.

Very pleasant are these loungings and the evening meetings of the young people. You stand on the fourth-floor balcony at twilight, between the dust and the stars, looking over the aching, muttering face of East London, and to you comes young Dolly, from No. 14B, to admire the "view." You lean together across the iron balustrade, gazing at something afar, and, somehow, it's the most natural thing in the world that your hand should find hers on the railing, and that she should return your squeeze and say "Don't be silly—you are a one!" That you should pull her hair for her sauciness, and that she should give you a tender push, and that you should somehow fall against each other, and remain so, silent and still under the lucid night. And in the morning, if Dolly is on the balcony brushing her hair, as you go off to work, isn't it natural, in that brisk light, that you should throw up a bunch of violets, and that she should throw you——

There was that affair of Cissie and Dick Wentworth.

Cissie lived on the fourth floor, sharing her rooms with a workmate, Ivy. Cissie was a heart-smiter, proud and petulant. Cissie was neat and slim, with large roguish eyes, and held much grace in her slender limbs. Her coloured frocks were always pretty and her little hats provocative. There was joy in her movements, in the swing of her light green dress, in the set

of her soft cotton blouse, and in the wonderful rhythmic fall of yellow hair from head to shoulders. Cissie and Dick met, casually, late one August night on the balcony, seeking cool air. An August midnight meeting on a fourth-floor balcony, far above the hushed streets, is sure to work a potent spell upon young hearts. You seem lifted above and withdrawn from the world of stale fact. You are gloriously alone in the city, prince and princess looking across your dominion; and, although only the night is listening, you whisper your talk.

Well, Cissie and Dick stayed on the balcony that night till two o'clock, as you knew they would; and next night they met again, and Cissie spoke her surprise.

"Oh—you? You seem to like this view."

Next night he brought two chairs, and they stayed longer, and went to bed late and got up tired, and had to run to work without breakfast. But they didn't grumble. Then, after a week of such nights, when London lay silent and prone with the heat, jewelled even in sleep, Dick took both her hands in his, and gently drew her from the railings back to the staircase. She hung back and tried to withdraw her hands. He held them tight, and pulled her close, and murmured "Cissie! Cissie!" They had a tug-of-war. He pulled her to the corridor leading to his room.

"No! No!" short and sharp. "Dick—no!"

"Oh—Cissie!"

"No—we mustn't!" But she did not speak

too sharply, because the pain in his voice hurt her.

"Dearest!"

"No! No. Let me go now. It's late. We mustn't—not to-night."

But she smiled then, and he felt her smile through the darkness.

"Not ever, dear?"

"I don't know, Dick. Perhaps . . .

"Don't you care for me at all, then?"

"Oh, I do, my dear. But . . . Not now. Perhaps . . ."

"Ah! When?"

"Let me go first."

He dropped her hands, and she turned towards her door. "I'll come to you, Dick, when . . ."

"Yes, when?

"When the caretaker gets a new coat! Ta-ta! Happy dreams!"

And away she flitted, and Dick returned to the balcony to lean over London and to swear, and stamp and sob. Minx! Hussy! Faggot! Little devil!

And he went no more to the balcony those hot nights, but mooned about the streets and drank too much beer, and went savagely to bed. Each morning, as he went to work, he gave a keen but pessimistic glance at the caretaker's apparel. No hope there, he felt, for many months; the caretaker always wore his raiment to rags. Cissie, he knew, meant what she said, and would abide by it; and he was too proud to plead for extenuation. Much as the little golden head and April eyes of Cissie had entangled him, he had no patience with whims, and he wanted to

tell her so, curtly, and dismiss her. But he couldn't. That smile of hers, the curious little upward twist of the left side of the mouth, had bemused him, and wouldn't let him. He could only go on wanting her. He would have liked to go into the garden and eat worms, but he was a worm himself.

Once or twice he passed her on the landing, and she shot her best pert grimace at him, but he would not stop. He went straight on, and even when she cried lightly, "The old coat's nearly worn out now!" he wouldn't turn his head. If he had, he might have seen that her face was crimson and very serious. But next day they passed on the stairs, so closely that he had to brush against her; and when he had gone up she stood on the ground floor, counting his footsteps and clenching her hands. There were tears in her eyes, and she remained still some minutes; then she clicked her lips and pattered upstairs.

That evening Dick mooned about the streets, more at odds with himself than ever. He couldn't even drink beer. The close contact with Cissie on the stairs, just the whisper of her frock against his fingers, had thrilled him anew and awakened all the passion that he thought he had damped down. Sick of the streets, disgusted with himself, and disgusted with home, he yet turned towards home, and came slouching into the yard of the tenement. And, damn it, there was Cissie standing right where he must pass, at the caretaker's door, and—aha!—with many old-age nods and smiles the old man was

lavishing thanks upon Cissie for the present of a new coat.

. . . . . .

A splendid misanthrope, our caretaker. He glories in it, as fanatics glory in mortification of the flesh. He has a round heavy face, scarred with deep lines at each side of the nose, a drooping mouth, and a beard of nondescript colour, which is never trimmed or combed. His gait is elephantine. He walks to any point as though he did not want to walk to that point. Each foot is set down slowly and hesitantly, and its fellow follows it after consideration. He has a habit of looking over one shoulder, which is, as it were, the scowl of contempt that the defeated give to the world they dare not challenge. He stands at his ground-floor door most of the day, leaning against the side-post, hands tucked in the top of his trousers, glooming upon his boots, or Grr-ing at the children as they come shouting down the stairs.

Tell him it's a fine day—"Ah, but it'll be cold in the evening." Tell him old Jackson has got work at last after six weeks out—"Ah, 'ad won't last long, though. No business about. They're putting 'em orf everywhere." Tell him you're glad to see he's looking better—"Ah, but I shall get it again when the damp weather comes." Tell him that the pubs are to close at ten—"Grrr! Taking away our liberties." Tell him that they're to keep open as long as they like—"Wod's the good when we ain't got no money?"

For life at large he has one brief blunt litany—"I d'no wot things er comin' to."

But withal a happy man, if serenity of mind and settled estate be happiness.

And even he expanded to one of our weddings. Our weddings were affairs. Everybody was invited, except that old thing on the third floor, who wouldn't join in anything. We all wore our Sunday clothes, and all the children were dressed in their best, and crowded about the courtyard and the staircases, waiting for the great moment. Some would go to the gate spying for the first approach of the cabs ; others, within, brought now and then reports of progress. "She's dressed! I seen 'er. Oo! she do look lovely. And 'er muvver's crying, they say." Ordinary affairs were suspended ; there was an atmosphere of expectancy. Work was neglected, and even the most hardened—like the caretaker—hung about to pick up bits of gossip. "They ought to be 'ere now—I 'ope nothing's 'appened. . . . Mrs. Minty'll *never* be ready. She ain't done 'er 'air yet. Don't seem to know where she is, like—all up in the air." Everybody sent a present, if only something towards the festa, or the "lend" of table appointments or extra chairs.

And when they came back from the church—Oo my! Then the yard glittered with confetti and the kids screamed and the old 'uns yelled, and the principals had to fight their way upstairs ; and we got an organ into the yard to make music under the windows during the feast and for the dancing in the yard that always followed. The bride, warm-cheeked and properly shy, wore lavender and white ; the bridegroom, with new

lounge suit and white buttonhole, grinned upon all.

The sitting-room and kitchen were "turned out" the week before. The table was covered with the best cloth, and the best spoons and forks, carefully preserved these two years, in an old bit of wash-leather, were brought out from their nest, and the children were let in by twos and threes to view the table. Then, after orders and disputes as to where the guests should sit, and a sort of impromptu game of musical chairs, they sat; and thereafter was rattle of knives and forks, clink of glasses and striving voices. The front door would be left open, and on the staircase groups of well-wishers gathered looking on and crying salutations. Everybody talked at once, and looked after everybody else, pushing dishes about or passing them over the heads of intervening guests.

"Sardines coming up, Uncle—I know you like 'em."

"Ah, me boy, you know me—eh?"

"Let me give you a bit o' fat, Auntie."

"Get those clean plates, Emmie. Come on, stir yourself."

Then followed the kids' feast, and the crumbs from the table were fairly distributed among them. Then we would adjourn to the yard, and dance, and tell stories, and the bottles would be opened; and when they were spent the male guests retired down the street to the place at the corner, and came back and brought so much zest to the occasion that the police would interfere, gently suggesting that we've had quite enough of that, and it's time to ease up. Well

well, perhaps it is; but, after all, we don't get married every day, do we? And you were young yourself once. . . . So we would ease up, and then discover that the bride and bridegroom had disappeared; and the rest of the evening, until past midnight, was spent in looking in at each other's rooms and discussing the affair.

Yes, altogether it went off very well. No hitches—nobody got "nasty," as they do sometimes on these occasions—even Uncle Fred found nothing to grumble at—and there was plenty of everything for everybody. Just a nice quiet affair. Everybody happy and no fuss. Oh, damn these rackety weddings. I can't stand 'em. And I must say that Mrs. Minty worked jolly hard to make everybody feel at home—wodder *you* say?

And, for the next few months, affairs were dated from "the wedding"—"jus' afore Minty's gel got married"—"You know—about a week after the Mintys' '*do*.'"

. . . . . .

Annie, our Salvation lady, was the character of the building. She had had a hard time as a girl, but she carried no scars. The Salvation Army caught her young and effaced her troubles. At seventeen she worked in a cork factory in Hoxton, and her work was tedious toil. The mean round of her life afforded nothing of change, adventure or warm amenity. It was a round of factory, home, bed; factory, home, bed. Beyond the crest of the hill of the day stretched the long desert of evening. Her work she could face—if not with active interest, at

least with complacence. It was the evenings that so chilled and depressed her.

Home meant a back kitchen, a ponderous, alcoholic father, and a querulous, complaining mother. Her father, when he was at home, didn't talk; he would come home heavily, go awkwardly to his chair, and sit there, drowsing, and "'mp"-ing to himself. Her mother's conversational repertory was too familiar. Annie's earliest memories of her mother were linked with phrases. She could tell the day and the occasion from the phrase. Monday's phrase, repeated from morn till eve, was "I shall never get through with this washing 'fore yer father comes 'ome." Wednesday—"There now, it's early closing, and we ain't got no tea." Every Wednesday, for years past, her mother had run out of tea. Saturday—"I 'ope yer father's 'ome soon or that stew'll be done to rags." Sunday—"I know that meat's going to be tough." And every day, about noon: "I don't seem able to get on at all to-day."

Annie knew always what her mother would say upon any given topic, and knew that it was not worth saying. But she had to sit and listen to it. For reading she cared nothing, and to sitting glumly at home, listening to the solo of nothingness, there was no alternative but a saunter along the Monkey's Parade. This was even less agreeable, for she had never been able to get a boy—her face and figure were not of the bold, immediate appeal that attracts youth—and the sight of other girls with boys was an exasperation. Never did her ears burn to the mutter of the strollers—"Nice bit, ain't she?

wouldn't mind 'aving 'er f'r a week-end, eh?" She belonged to her environment, yet was filled with discontent. Her language was something more than coarse. Her habits were offensive. Her ways were graceless and unbeguiling. But she was hungry for change and adventure. Had a boy on Jamaica Road seized her, she would have given whatever he asked.

But one Sunday evening she stopped at a street corner to snatch some solitary amusement from a Salvation Army meeting. A young woman, of indeterminate age, was speaking, and suddenly Annie was caught. She hardly followed the message, which was crude and obvious, delivered in a piercing street-corner falsetto. What held her was the colour and the glory and the fervour of the woman's face; and when the eyes rested on her, and flung her a share of their ardour, she, too, suffered a thrill of exaltation.

As she stood transfixed, a boy pulled her hair. She turned. "What a face!" The boy passed on, and Annie turned again to the half-circle of tense eyes. Abandoned joy was here, expressed as fluently as Bank Holiday emotions in the parks. She had never been able to join the Bank Holiday crowds—they did not want outsiders; but this woman seemed to be inviting her to kick her heels with them and have a good time, singing Glory! Glory! Glory! with a bang of the drum and a frivolous clangour of the tambourines. With magnificent abasement these people called themselves sinners, and sang and shouted about their sinfulness, and laughed happily in speaking of the Great Friend who had redeemed them. They praised

God in a dozen different ways. They bawled. They bellowed. They brayed. They piped. They chuckled. They yelped. They intoned. They roared. Happy, happy children of sin! Oh, glory, glory!

When the meeting broke up she slid shyly to the speaker. The woman listened to her halting sentences, and seemed to understand. They took her to the Citadel. She was questioned closely by the captain, and was told to call again during the week. She called, and went with them to an open-air meeting. She sang "Glory! Glory!" and thrilled to her own voice. But this was not enough. She pressed them to accept her, and finally, after pointing out the hardships that she might have to face, and trying, by searching questions, to discover whether she really desired to serve Jesus and was ready to suffer in the cause, they accepted her.

On the religious point she dissembled, and told more than the truth. Of religion she knew only what she had been taught at school; and she knew the Gospels only as she knew the rivers of England and the points of the Pennine Chain. Faith and doubt and soul-searching had little appeal for her. The harassing scramble for the day's bread, the bruising workaday round, left little energy for the spiritual life. She wanted to join *them;* their object hardly interested her. Indeed, she could not have told you what the Salvation Army was *for;* she only saw it as a happy band of brothers and sisters, working joyfully for the Lord as others worked, less joyfully, for the Borough Council.

But with all her heart she did what she was

told to do. Here at last was adventure. Working for the Lord was more exciting than making corks. Here was something upon which she could direct her store of energy and service to interesting purpose; something to live for; a career. So she became a probationer, and was put to laborious tasks—scrubbing, washing, selling the *War Cry* in public-houses, going out at night, with others, to lead broken women to the Shelter. This, to test the depth of her enthusiasm.

She came through it. Her factory mates called "Sally!" to her in the streets; but she was done with them. And slowly, imperceptibly, the romance and adventure changed into a quiet, filling rapture. She awakened to the faith that was in her companions, and it grew within her. Without thought or self-searching, she came to share their complete trust in goodness, and to find a daily beauty in the world and a delight in her work. She rose slowly but steadily from the ranks.

She is now a leader in her section. She might have married a young man of the factory and lived a fretful housekeeping life, desiring more than her means afforded. She might have gone with the boys, and be now on the streets. She might be toiling still in the factory. Instead, though she is still called "Sally!" she has everything that she wants; she has achieved complete happiness. Go to Great Eastern Street one Sunday night, and you will see in her face something that few of us possess. . . .

. . . . . .

But we were not always happy. We had our

occasional "cases" and "bad lots." Not so very bad, though. I had much sympathy with Mrs. Green's Edie. I'm sure she wasn't a bad girl at the start; but Edie once abstracted a blouse from a stall in Brick Lane, and was prosecuted. The magistrate didn't call it kleptomania or "megrims." Edie had no medical expert to bring testimony that she was a nervous subject. She had no influential friends, no knights and bishops, to appear in court on her behalf and show that she was well connected and subject to aberrations, and had lately suffered from headaches. So she spent five years in Purgatory, except for a few days, when she escaped, and was found in the protection of a man. She told me what was said to her on her recapture. She was called a dirty, dirty Thing, not fit to mix with the other girls; and she told me what she said to them. Something like this:

I ain't then. It's yew that's dirty. 'E's bin all right to me; treated me like a 'uman being. But yew treat me like a—like—a bit of——" and here followed a rough and ready but vivid simile.

She did not come home when she was released. A post in "service" was found for her; and when she did come home she had left "service." She came home in good clothes, and looked the world in the face—with a wink. She and the housemaid had got together, and the cook had noted a certain secret alliance between them. They could not be allowed to stay there to corrupt the girls of the family; their behaviour was reported to the authorities. But Edie and

her friend were too quick for them. They bolted.

The housemaid knew a "place," and as they were both bright pleasant girls they were received into that "place"—certainly no worse a "place" than the barrack that had held her for five years. It was a "place" where only "gentlemen" of good family were received; and the lady in charge impressed upon Edie the urgent necessity, under pain of immediate expulsion, of complete secrecy and tact. Some of the visitors were famous men, but if Edie recognised them from their portraits in the papers she was not to know them. See? And some of them were—peculiar—see? But, if Edie wanted to get on, she would make herself agreeable and willing; the more she pleased, the more money she would get; but no "nonsense" would be tolerated by the "gentlemen." No intoxicated men were admitted to that house. Its reputation for respectability was unassailable, and Edie and her friend must live up to that.

They did. And, though Edie's mother wept and implored, and moaned at the life of her daughter, Edie was unmoved. She had had her five years of hell, and looked no farther than respite from its memories. I saw her the other day. She has left the house, and is now living in the semi-married state with a "gentleman" who "treats me like a Duchess, and says he never had anybody who suited him as I do. I don't know how long it'll last."

But Edie's no fool. She has looked after herself well, and has money in the bank. And she has polished herself, and toned her accent

and speech to the requirements of politeness. But it's her eyes that bother you, if you look at them after looking at Annie's.

A more human type was Mrs. Dobson, the occasional charlady. Life, for her, was a joke, and her philosophic attitude was expressed in profound husky bursts of laughter. If a man slipped down in the street—Haw-haw!—out came that laugh. If the dinner went wrong, or there was no dinner, or her rheumatism crippled her—Haw-haw!—short and explosive. Goodness and naughtiness, the rent collector and the shooter-of-moons, the drunkard and the teetotaller—all made her laugh. She even laughed at the air raids. And her Sunday, instead of being a day of rest, was a day of laughter—at her own troubles and at other people's. She had a hoarse voice and a clear spirit attuned to the old verities. Her laugh gave you at once her character, for laughs are as expressive as faces or talk. There is the *Ha-ha-ha!* of the brainless, healthy man. There is the shop-girl's falsetto *Her-her-her!* There is the deep *Ugh-ugh-ugh!* of the flesh-loving man. There is the cackling *Heh-heh-heh!* of the cheerless man. There is the toneless *Teh-he-he!* of the man without a soul; and there is the gusty *Haw-haw-haw!* of great spirits like Mrs. Dobson.

When I first arrived at the tenement, I was asked how I was "going on" about cleaning. "'Fyou want anything done, Mrs. Dobson'll do for yeh." I said: "I guess I can't afford that." "Oh yes you can. She won't want much. Anything yeh like to give 'er—that's 'er style." "Well, who is Mrs. Dobson?"

"Oh, 'er on the forf floor. You know—stout little party, rather bad on 'er feet, and fond of 'er little drop." "Oh, *I* know." And so I became one more charge of Mrs. Dobson's.

The Duchess she was called, and I liked her much better than the only Duchess I have met. The name came to her from early days when she kept a fruit and vegetable stall, which shamed its neighbouring stalls by its polish, neatness and arrangement, and by the personal spick-and-spanness of its proprietor. She was an excellent cook—but for her language many a select household would have thought her a prize; a good laundress, a doughty scrubber, a confident nurse, and a regular "one" with babies. And what a worker! How she would cut about up and down the steep, stone stairs of the tenement, rheumatism and all. "If work's gotta be done, get on with it. Staendin' lookin' at it won't do it. Walk into it. That's what I do and always 'ave 'ad to do. I d'no, though . . . some people seem to get away with it. Look at that daem fool daen stairs I do for—young 'Artley, the medical. 'E won't work if 'e can get aet of it. 'Spose we was all like that? Nice sorta world it'd be—eh? And yet 'e seems to git on. Haw-haw!"

I don't know what there is of inspiration in the business of daily house-helpers, but I have never yet met a disagreeable charlady. All seem to possess, as a blessed recompense, some store of serenity, some faculty for easy outlook upon the saddest prospect. Mrs. Dobson has had two children, both wrong 'uns. They took after "farver," who disappeared some years ago.

The elder boy, after doing well in an office, earning £3 a week —of which he gave his mother eight shillings a week —"I don't eat more'n eight shillings' worth"—was caught with his hand in the safe, and is now in Reading. The younger got no job at all, nor tried for one. He lounged about the streets, and lived on his mother, demanding four meals a day, and, when these were not to be had, assaulted her with evil words and nubbly fists. Often she appeared in public with a black eye or discoloured cheek, and, as it was known that she was not living with her husband, she was at great trouble in inventing convincing stories about them. But at last the wastrel got his in a street-corner fight.

But she spoke of them proudly, as wonders of wickedness. "Thad George o' mine —'e was a bit o' no-good, if yeh like. I d'no when I come across such a rotter as 'e was. 'E never cared fer nobody. The mess 'e useter make of 'is farver when they 'ad a row . . ."

When there was no work to be had she would sit and chuckle at the damnableness of things; and when summoned to a job she would receive it with Falstaffian laughter.

"Please, Missis Dobson, mumma's in bed wiv 'er bad leg, and can you come up and do our dinner?"

"Haw-haw! Never a minute's peace. I d'no 'ow you'd all go on wivout me. All right, ducky—I'll be up in a minute. . . . And wipe yer nose—snotty-face! If I was yer mother . . ."

She was the willing slave of the tenement. If a difficult or disagreeable task were to be done,

people thought at once of her, and slid it to her shoulders. She was a soft-mark, and her acquaintances knew it. "Missis Dobson'll see to that."

"I wonder if yeh'd mind, Missis Dobson. You understand these things, and I'm such a fool." So always she was on her feet, doing other people's shopping, taking other people's children to the doctor, minding other people's babies, and buying other people's insurance stamps; and in return they gave her a few coppers or a drink or a meal, and lent her their novelettes. "I like a bit o' love—I don' wanta read the noospaper 'orrors."

Often she had a shilling on the big races with the caretaker, and roared with laughter and got mildly drunk when she backed a winner, and laughed out rich round curses when she lost. "My blasted 'orses seem to be like me—alwis left daen the course and sworn at. Haw-haw!" Her chief joy in life was her cup of tea, "me old cup o' glory!" It is a blessed comforter to the poor, the cup of tea; that and a good fire change the whole complexion of things from drab to rosy. In the morning, if you are out of sorts, it bucks you up. In the middle of washing-day, it at once soothes and recreates energy. At the end of washing-day it takes the edge off exhaustion and warms the heart through. In the afternoon it provides a blessed space of rest and refreshment; and at all hours it lightens the oppressive air, disperses worry, packs clouds away, and brings new hope or at least calm acceptance. In sorrow or rejoicing, war or peace—"let's make a cup o' tea, dearie!"

So that she had her tea, Mrs. Dobson would carry on. Not until that was out of reach, would she give in. Through many foodless days and fireless weeks, people would urge her to seek relief—to go on the parish or apply to the church for coal and groceries tickets. "What—me 'old aet for charity? No fear, me gel. Not me. I ain't come as low as that yet. I got some self-respeck left. As long as I can get me cup o' tea, I can 'old aet until things improve. I got me 'ealth an' strength, thaenk Gawd, an' while I got that I won' be in nobody's debt. I ain't going trucklin' to nobody."

. . . . . .

Granny Simpson was just such another, but in a softer key. She never stood up to life. She accepted, without complaint and without appreciation; and she is now in "the house." But her afternoon out is a Great Adventure, and sometimes she may be seen down our street. Her whole life has been bounded by narrow streets, lowering roofs and cramped rooms. Her horizon, physically, was the other side of the street; mentally, to-morrow. She dared not look farther. From childhood her life has been without distance or "views." She was born in Hoxton, and lived and slaved in Hoxton, fighting always for the present. Even her rent was collected daily, for her landlord knew how hazardous was to-morrow. Her life was without much sorrow or much joy; just a dreary struggle. No man had chosen her; no romance, which she called "nonsense," had come to her. Single she had lived and toiled. She had little to give in the way of friendship, and therefore

received none, for she wanted that vital something that inspires interest and feeling. When she could no longer hold a needle, she knew that it was The House. Neighbours commiserated her descent and her miserable sentence, but she saw it otherwise. She was beaten, but, though she lost her spirit, she did not lose her trust in the essential goodness of things.

"'Tain't so bad, when you look at it prop'ly. We all got to sink our pride sometimes. 'Tany rate, it'll be me first real rest. I shan't 'ave no more worry about anything."

She is a bit of a character in the district, and on her afternoon out receives many greetings. Old age and open misfortune have given her a more definite character and loosened her early reserve. People smile upon her now, though before she could not command a nod.

One outing is much like another. It proceeds something like this. She potters from the gates of The House, in its evil-grey uniform, and peers up and down the street. The sun shows a pallid face through the smoke, and falls on littered streets, ragged roofs, unkempt doorways, and greasy shops. Its rays beat up the accumulated odours of cellar and alley-way, and, to most noses, the air is bitter. But Granny sniffs it, and approves. "Lovely day again. I always 'ave the luck. I always 'ave King's weather!"

A dockman, passing, stops. "'Ullo, Gran. Your day orf again? I wish I was you. 'Ere! — that'll get you a drop o' something." A few coins pass.

"Well, I never. Now, if that ain't kind.

Real kind. Well, well. . . . There's a lot o' good in the world, if you only knew it. Fourpence! Now with that I could 'ave a nice tram ride. And yet a little drop o' something'd be nice, too. It'd 'ave to be beer, though."

She pads away, debating the matter—tram ride or a little drop o' something. Then a young girl, dressed in the flashy cast-offs of the second-hand, observes her.

"Cheero, Ma! Orf on the loose again? 'Ere—I done a good bit o' business last night. 'Ere's something to spend at the Church Bazaar—that'll get you a glass or two."

"Well now, dearie, if that ain't kind. You've got a 'eart, you 'ave."

Granny marches on, with firmer step now. "A nice ride *and* a drop o' something. Well, well . . . God is good, bless 'Is 'eart, if we only knew."

Then, except on the occasions when the casual benefits of good hearts have failed her, Granny follows her regular programme. She boards an East-bound tram-car, with much flighty back-chat to the conductor, and takes a ticket for Wanstead Flats; and on the journey looks keenly about her, seeing everything and enjoying everything. There isn't much doing that escapes her. At the Flats she leaves the car, and stands for some moments, looking upon the "view." She looks upon an open space of withered grass and hard, bald turf. The turf is usually littered with oddments of paper. Behind the broken bushes the tram-cars clatter, and the horizon offers ash-heaps and factories

sending smoke across the brown grass. The stunted trees give it an air of desolation. Granny stands and sniffs and sniffs.

"Different air out here altogether. Country air, like. And what a fine view. Well, God *is* good, bless 'Is 'eart, letting me get out 'ere. And, if I was a real lady, I'd come and sit out 'ere every day!"

In the Shops and the Markets

JOHNSON'S remarks upon the felicities afforded by a good inn might aptly be applied to good shops. Shops are the first amenity of civilisation. They are a promise of sociability. They give news of the civil bustle of men. They are an unwaning delight for all, young and old, rich and poor, for you may have all the joy of their windows without spending a penny. Their lights are more alluring and more satisfying than the lights of all your houses of entertainment, and you are more candidly welcomed at their doors than at the doors of most inns. Note how even a short line of shops stirs the languid prospect of a suburban street, and how they lighten the tone of things within their immediate neighbourhood. Within the orbit of shops people move more briskly, if slowly, than in the long streets of houses. The sight of a High Street of bright shops after much turning in side-streets is as pleasing and invigorating as the sight of a firelit window after a country walk. You feel once again in touch with the humanities and with the genial swell of affairs.

London has shops for all tastes; gigantic shops, everyday shops, dainty shops, eccentric shops, whimsical shops, bazaars, booths, arcades, and stalls. Every commodity that the world produces has its proper shop in London. There are

shops for pearls and platinums and ivory ; shops for Eastern silks and spices ; shops for Arctic furs ; shops for American candy ; shops for East Indian coral ; shops for Cingalese fruits ; shops for South Sea *bric-à-brac ;* shops (once again) for German delicatessen, for Lapland oils, for Serbian embroidery, for Chinese musical instruments and for Japanese underwear ; and shops for all the world's foods and all the world's postage-stamps.

The great Stores are imposing pieces and lend pomp to the streets they occupy, but my fancy prefers the grace and dignity of the smaller shops. These do not profess the large manner. They are nice in their architecture and individual in their methods. They retain the old style, when, if a shop bore the name of Smith or Jones over the door, you could go in and ask for Mr. Jones or Mr. Smith, and be sure of finding him. Few of them to-day have personal association with the names over their doors, but style and atmosphere remain. I think of the beautiful shops of Fribourg & Treyer, in Haymarket, of Hatchard and Fortnum & Mason, in Piccadilly, of Dunhill's, in Duke Street, of the bell foundry in Whitechapel Road, of Buzard's in Oxford Street, of Quaritch's in Grafton Street, of Ellis's, in Bond Street, of the old chemist's shop in Drury Lane, of Francis Downman's wine-shop in Dean Street, of Birch's in Cornhill, of the shops under the old houses at Holborn Bars, and of various shops in Burlington Arcade and round about Savile Row. All of them are shops of age and character—vintage shops.

They know no rough business of buying and

selling. You choose or order what you want, and the assistants are delighted to give you their time and to talk with you about your purchases and about their vocation. It is no mere trade ; it is more than a profession ; and the assistants are of the priesthood. At Dunhill's, pipes are sold by ceremony, and the assistants are elegantly robed and handle the pipes with gloved hands. There is a story told in Duke Street of the hasty young man from the provinces blundering into Dunhill's.

"Sir ?"

"I want a pipe."

The priest looked perplexed and took counsel of himself. "A pipe ? Pipe ?"

"Yes, a pipe. You know—briar."

"*Pipe*, sir ?" still more embarrassed. "Pipe ?"

"Yes, hang it all, man. A pipe. Quick—I've got to catch a train. Pipe !"

"Pipe ? 'M." The high priest was called. "Gentleman wants a pipe."

"A pipe ?" Senior and junior stared upon the young man with vexed brows. "Afraid I don't quite——"

"Dash it all, don't you sell pipes here ? Well, I want a pipe. What you smoke. One of your pipes. A Dunhill. . . ."

"O-o-o-oh !" with a swift clearing of face. "O-o-oh, a *Dunhill* ? *Now* I understand, sir. But you said a *pipe !*"

In Burlington Arcade there is similar ceremony. You do not buy things in the Arcade. You select and order—half a dozen pairs of boots, two dozen ties, six dozen collars ; and, if you are a born fool, a dressing-gown at fifty

pounds and a dozen lounge shirts at two guineas each. And, when you buy cigarettes at Fribourg & Treyer's, or wine at Mr. Downman's, the business rises to ritual.

It is the shops of London, I think, that give the Cockney child his first thrill of rapture in his city. Their number, their brave display, and their multitudinous appeal are sure breath-takers. Rank upon rank they stand for review, each with its personal note, each offering something new and splendid, necessary or deeply desirable. Indeed, a walk through the shop-streets is as good a tonic as I know ; better than any country solitude. Amid the happy parade and warm tumults of the streets one may escape in an hour from all gloom and introspection ; the long green desert of the country only intensifies these disorders. Many folk, when harassed, or run down, express a desire to " get away from everything " ; and they try to do this by going to the country. But the effectual escape is not from " things," but from yourself ; and I find that in the fields and woods the most looming object of the landscape is oneself. It o'ertops everything, and colours everything.

It is a mistake, I think, that town life rubs down the bright angles of character. Truly only in town are people their whimsical selves, living, freely and fully, their own lives. Life in the country is of necessity communal ; one must fit in or get out ; and for social intercourse one is limited to one's immediate circle, which may be unsympathetic. Choice of society or solitude is not to be had. You are either bothered by dull visitors or eyed sideways with sullen curios-

ity. But London never intrudes. There one may find whatever sort of society one wishes, or complete solitude, at the moment's whim; and to all who are suffering from dumps, nerves, megrims, vapours, or boredom, I would say, Go out and look at the shops. Before you know it, your alien humours will be dissipated.

I was brought up in the heart of shop-land, and my earliest memories are of the West End highways, and of darting, keen-eyed, from one shop-window to another; and never have they ceased to fascinate me. I can still stroll for miles down their lines, or waste hours within their doors, without a moment of fatigue. At every pace the mind is caught and occupied; kept alert but not unsettled. Let me get into Fortnum & Mason's, and I ask no better entertainment. That is, for me, the most alluring of all shops; and although I'm a plain man, of leg-of-mutton tastes, the sight of their windows and their garnished delicacies is irresistible. I cannot pass them. I must go in and survey the glazed chickens and the noble briskets, the glossy boars' heads, the brown Bath chaps, the bewildering assortment of exotic *hors d'œuvres*—cock's-combs in jelly, truffles from Perigord, caviare from Astrachan, anchovies from Scandinavia, olives from the South—in jars and bottles, their vessels fashioned in fantastic shapes for their delightful purposes. Each corner of the shop makes its picture. In one, the hams, tongues, fowls, galantines, sausages and salamis; in another the Yorkshire pies, Melton Mowbrays, game pies, Oxford brawns, jellies, biscuits and Oriental flim-flams—curry powders, potted char,

Bombay ducks, poppadums, ginger, chutneys, mangoes, balachoung, and, in another, the thousand little tins, jars, packets and bottles of table trifles, each with its native style and decoration ; and, if you are lucky, through it all will march the thrilling figure of a white-robed chef bringing from below some lordly dish for the " cold " table.

I say it is one of the spectacles of London, and it always draws me when I am in Piccadilly ; but there were days when it would have driven me to fury. Any ham-and-beef shop had that effect on me, then. You may have noticed, if you have had hungry days, that it's the ham-and-beef shops that always exasperate. Your stomach may be empty, and your limbs faint, but you can pass the butcher, the grocer, the baker, the fishmonger, the confectioner, even restaurants and tea-shops without any spasms. It's the ham-and-beef shop, with its genteel and titillating display ready to the eye, that makes you look round for that 'alf-brick. It's the sight of the decked and garnished dishes—the ham in cut, and its pink and cream slices and its pink odour—that makes a Communist of a hungry Tory.

There were two kinds of shop then that inflicted sweet torment upon me—ham-and-beef shops and bookshops. Sometimes I was able to enter one of them, but never both in the same week. Mostly I could only look and satisfy my longings with a sniff at the one and a sort of second-hand taste of the other. How I would gaze upon the hams and the jellied tongues ! And how I would pore over the tantalising pages of

the Bookman Christmas Number, which told me, curtly, of delicious treasures that I could never possess. How I would languish outside the windows of that bookshop in Queen Street, feeding my eyes and my envy with sight of precious volumes to be had for a certain number of shillings that I never could get together. I never dared to go in, save when I went on the business of a sixpenny edition; I feared that they would know that I had nothing in my pocket, and had merely come to handle, to sample, to snatch a few minutes' delight without fee; and that they would kick me out. I don't think now that they would have done that; booksellers are humane creatures; but youth sees itself too sharply.

For the Stores I care little. Though admirable as conveniences, they have none of the appeal of the shops, nor are their assistants so human and agreeable as the small-shop assistant. How can they be — working in palaces? Of necessity they acquire something of the marble-and-gilt tone of their surroundings; and the marmoreal manner, though proper to church sidesmen, butlers, and toast-masters, ill becomes the coquetry of shopping. Then I always have the feeling, in these places, that I'm under observation. It may be conscience, but every pillar seems to shield a detective, and every other shopper has the detective air. It is very pleasant to stroll through courtyards with fountains and mosaic pavements, to walk upstairs on velvet pile, to play bo-peep around pillars of Carrara marble, to find, on wet days, lunch and telephone and ticket-office and cloakroom under

one roof ; but that isn't shopping. One goes to the Stores deliberately, giving a day or half-day to it, but shopping only yields its full flavour when it is done in the first rush of a whim or a mood. It should begin, without intent, on a sudden glance at a shop-window and the fierce desire to spend money, and should cease with satiety or empty pockets. The journey from shop to shop whets the appetite, but the sight of the Stores, where everything lies within reach, dissuades rather than excites. There is no fun in making conquest of the willing.

Another thing—whether by accident or personal eccentricity—I never can get what I want in these universal provision stores, and I feel that the assistant doesn't really care whether I do or not. The first question he asks you, when you have stated that you want a certain article, is: "What sort?" Why should he ask me that? The doctor might just as well ask you what sort of medicine you would like, or a lawyer what sort of action you'd like to bring. These people are in their job year in and year out, and their business is to advise the customer, not to let the poor fool fuddle himself with choosing. Your ordinary tailor always asks you what material you'd like for your new suit, and how you'd like it cut. Yet he is supposed to be a specialist in clothes, giving his time and attention to the study of styles and fashions and clothes generally. It is for him to prescribe for me ; to tell me how I ought to dress—not to let me go out in a broad-stripe, high-coloured cloth that can only fitly be worn by your six-foot, broad-shouldered man. But he doesn't

care. If I went to the Stores and said I wanted a hat, and picked out a tall silk hat, with curly brim, I know the assistant would let me go away with it.

But your bookseller is more jealous of his reputation. I never knew a London bookseller who would let his customer make a fool of himself with his books. He wouldn't let the tired business man, who, he knows, wants Mr. Phillips Oppenheim or Mr. David Whitelaw, go away with Einstein or the Life and Letters of the Bishop of Duddington. Nor would he let the lofty-browed young man of serious bent go out with a summer-holiday story about love under the apple trees. Not he. He would hate himself for a week if that happened.

"Pardon me, sir. No. Not that one. A slight mistake, I think. It might suit the lighter build of mind, but hardly yours, I think. Allow me—let me take it. Thank you. Now this, I think—this is perhaps a little more in the key. An excellent little work by Professor Thomas Burke—published last week—'The Inter-relation of Prunes and Prisms.'"

. . . . . .

But better even than shops or stores are the stalls of the street markets. They lack the gloss and dignity and brilliance of the shops, but they have an open-air boldness that is equally alluring; and, if you want to spy upon the Londoner in his most un-self-conscious phases, the best observation-posts are the street markets. The streets themselves, and the theatres and the parks and the bars, all throw back the high lights of humanity, but it is humanity seeking

recreation and a little conscious of itself. In the markets we have people on business, oblivious of everything but the exigency of the moment; and we see them as they are, in the habit and speech of every day, fighting the battle of life and seeking the elusive something-for-nothing, peering here and there for the cheapest meat or fish, or a piece of oilcloth for the kitchen, or a parlour table, or trimmings for a hat.

"Going to market" is a phrase that is seldom heard among the respectable, who suppose it to be a phrase descriptive of a village function. For their household purchases they "go shopping," but those in less comfortable circumstances do literally "go to market." The shops are not for them. They find their value in those narrow streets of stalls which evoke memories of the hot, sounding Bazaars and Bonanzas of the East.

There were stalls when London and Westminster first began to trade, and, though much has changed and disappeared in the passing of the centuries, the stalls remain, and their cries remain. Once it was "What d'ye lack, my masters, what d'ye lack?" "Hot codlings!" "Buy any gingerbread! Gilt gingerbread!" "What is't you buy—rattles, drums, halberts, horses, fiddles o' the finest?" "New Ballads!" "Cherry Ripe!" "Ribs of beef!" "Hot sheep's feet!" "Hot peascod!" "Pepper and saffron!" "Mack-er-el!" "Fine felt hats or spectacles to read!" "Silks, lawns, and Paris thread!" "Rushes green!" To-day it is "Buy! Buy! Buy!" "'Ere's yer fine orange—all

sahnd an' juicy!" "Pick 'em out where yeh like!" "Comerlong, ladies, this way fer yer fine ripe strawb'ry!" Long may they continue to flourish and to cry! For how much more joyous it is to shop casually and exchange rough banter in the open air (though the air be none too sweet) than in the elaborately appointed Emporium or Stores.

The war brought a great increase in the number of street markets and we have lately heard much outcry from the ill-used shops against their pert competitors. Similar outcry was made in Elizabeth's time by the shopkeepers against stall-holders as "unruly people." But questions of prestige and economics apart, I am for the stalls. Selfridge's and Harrods are delightful places in which to spend a dull hour, but, as I have said, that is about all I do spend there. For my lighter purchases I go to the stalls. Their tradition goes farther than that of the shops; too, they have more warmth, colour, and vitality. The stores-assistant, even at his best, serves you casually, wearily, as though his business were indeed a business and a sorry one. I were rather served by the most scapegrace pedlar or hawker or stall-holder than the most polished shop-assistant; for with your stall-holder every sale is an occasion for an outburst, a hoop-la! of delight. He rejoices at his business, and tells the street about it; where your shopkeeper goes about his trading darkly, with hushed voice, as though fearful lest his rival should get to hear of it. He labours in secret, while the stall-holder shouts to the sunshine or cries your custom under flagrant naphthas.

Monk and I lately filled a Saturday morning with a tour of these bazaars, beginning at Soho and finishing at Roman Road, E. Most people, when they think of street markets, think only of two—Caledonian Market and the Sunday morning market of Middlesex Street. But neither of these markets has now any shred of character left. Too much Press publicity has ruined them. Petticoat Lane years ago became a show-place, and laid itself out to attract the unsophisticated sight-seer, as the New York Bowery did ; and when, during the war, Mayfair began to visit Caledonian Market in its Rolls-Royces, one knew that it was discovered and finished.

But there are others, equally picturesque, and full of rich character and exclusive customs. All working-class quarters, and most suburbs, have, of course, their Saturday night stall-markets, but I am speaking here of those markets that persist through the week in Soho, Seven Dials, Farringdon Road, Notting Dale, Brick Lane, Exmouth Street, Whitecross Street, under the eccentric spire of St. Luke's, and, the biggest of them all, the enclosed market near Wakefield Street, East Ham, which is as vast and as vehement as Bartholomew Fair. Each has its distinguishing "tone," each its own type of shopper and hawker, and each its physical atmosphere (very strong, this).

The Berwick Street Market is chiefly kept by Jews, but its patrons are cosmopolitan—French, Swiss, Italian, Greek, and Suburban. At every step one breathes garlic and wool, and receives fragments of talk in many richly coloured dia-

lects of Europe. Berwick Street serves not only the table but the Bottom Drawer as well. Here are "silk" stockings at a shilling or so, "pearl" necklaces, "Brussels" lace, blouses, jumpers, dress lengths, shirts, vests, pants, misfit trousers, collars, ties, jostling the frolic produce of the South—pimentos, olives, Roquefort, ravioli, green peppers, truffles of Perigord, Chianti, salsifi, polenta, Bologna sausage, capsicum, salami. Here in the morning you will find the women of France, hatless, doing their *marché* as at home, and with them the knowing ones from the suburbs, who have learnt the hygienic and æsthetic value of a varied table. People move here with that alert languor that belongs to the quarter. Even strangers, moving with the businesslike tread of the Londoner, catch something of its quality, and come from Berwick Street with a lighter toe and a more *soufflant* eye.

Here they do not cry their wares; they wheedle you. You are making a difficult passage through Little Pulteney Street, when an Oriental whisper tickles your ear—"Lovely thilk tieth, thir—on'y a shilling each!"—"Jutht look at theth thockth, thir—all thilk!" But you are not pestered—the remark is dropped only as a hint. There is none of the buy-buy-buy clamour here. Like the stores, this market has its regular customers and it only makes a bid for your attention in the manner of the shop-walker. Even the great corner shop for fish and poultry, in Rupert Street, festooned with fowls and draped with flat fish, does its vast business with little noise. The assistants do not, as in other markets, step out and buttonhole the

wayfarer with challenges: "'Eere—mister—*you* never see a finer bird than that, *I* know. Just 'ave a feel of it—go on. I can do you that at one-and-ten a pound." Or "Sort 'em out where yeh like—all sahnd and juicy!" The scene is as quietly vivacious as the *marché* of a French country town.

I wish that by some means something of this nonchalance might be conveyed to the somewhat pedestrian affairs of Hoxton Street. The physical air here is heavy, and few breezes come to lighten it. It is fed with the odours of whelks, sheeps' hearts, trotters, offal, fish-and-chips, vegetables and that devitalising smell that belongs to very second-hand furniture. But food prevails, for Hoxton Street's main business is to keep body and soul together, and the rare occasions of silken dalliance are sufficiently served by the "Old Brit," now, alas, a movie palace, and a few pubs. Here is much study for the philosopher. Marketing here moves slowly, anxiously. It is not a matter of seeking the best at the lowest price, but of looking for what can be got for a few pence. The faces are knitted into shapes of care, and the eyes are tense, and the fingers close tightly upon the purses, as the women hover around each stall, fearful of paying too dearly for even a makeshift meal. Nerves are on edge, and buyers and sellers alike are petulant. Each walks on a narrow ledge above disaster. It is as quiet as the Soho market, but with a different quiet. Certainly they make a noise, but their noise is less cheerful than Soho's quiet. It has a bitter note, almost a wailing in it.

Farther eastward, in Chrisp Street, Poplar, the tones of life are a little louder and fuller, and the wares are assorted. They do well here. Many stalls have abandoned the old rowdy naphtha flares and are fitted with electric light. Old iron and old magazines break the line of to-day's rabbits and yesterday's fish. The old sweetstuff stall survives here, with its home-made "humbugs" and clove rock and bulls'-eyes; and these light the street with the spirit of childhood. I often pity the children of Kensington Gardens with their silken clothes and "latest children's fashions" and well-upholstered carriages and sedate nursemaids. They miss so much. I am sure they would rather know the joy of the toffee apple or the rapture of the weekly penny, and the nervous delight of placing it to the highest advantage, than move among the emblems of prosperity. But their sheltered lives will never give it. They may, in later life, visit these markets, but they will never catch their true temper. They may find some pleasure in them, but it will be counterfeit pleasure. The doll at three-halfpence (yes, you can get dolls for three-halfpence), the parlour game at twopence, the box of coloured crayons at three-halfpence, the box of beads at a penny, the singing bird in a cage at twopence—they will never suffer the ecstasy of first possession of these wonders. One must be a child, and a child of the streets, to taste the true enjoyment of that moment.

Every child of Mayfair and Kensington who saw the Chaplin picture, "The Kid," must have

wished he were that kid, as every poor child who wanders down Oxford Street wishes that he had a rich father. But if the wish of the poor child were satisfied he would be quickly disappointed, for his rich father could not give him the glamorous moments that his present makeshift life affords. For, if his whims were met, he would lose the serious, splendid thrill of laying out his weekly coin. The rich child buys his toys at a store from a sleek assistant, who is polite to him; but the child of Poplar can make friends with his toy merchant, who is never polite and frequently profane.

There is a warmth among the stall-holders of Chrisp Street. Sometimes, as when Mrs. Gubbins, who has been studying the "proper retail prices" in certain daily papers, expresses her views on the quality of the potatoes, it becomes heat. But it is all in the day's work. No Offence Given, None Taken, is the motto. Many of the stalls anticipate argument by displaying gaily devised catchwords: "Live and Let Live"—"Quality and Civility"—"If Not Pleased Tell Us; If Pleased Tell Others"—"We Serve Others as We would like to Be Served." And with the written mottoes goes a vociferous comment on the goods and the state of business, man against man, stall against stall. Their cries are peremptory rather than seducing. The voices are husky, or strident, but they are the voice of Autolycus crying his wares in the poetry of the streets.

The warmth of Chrisp Street is not perhaps a very seemly warmth. It is not, so to speak, the full, glittering warmth of the fireside, but

rather the rough warmth of blankets; and, if your skin is of the roseleaf, it will exacerbate rather than soothe. But these markets are not for the fair-skinned; they are for those who lie roughly, and mix the business of marketing with the entertainment of rich and ready banter, of clamorous dispute and vehement accord.

Here, on Saturday nights, and in most of the East End markets, you will find still, among the substantial joints and rabbits and silks and furs, the stall of the colporteur, laden with spiritual uplift. Its sides are hung with illuminated Bible texts, and it is stocked with Testaments, concordances, Spurgeon's Talks, miscellaneous magazines, the *Friendly Gleaner*, *Life and Work*, and back numbers of those too-too pious organs, *The Cottager and Artisan* and the *British Workman*. The colporteur is a grave, shy character, who spends most of his time in rearranging his stall, or, if he catches a wandering eye, pointing silently but eloquently to one of his texts—"*Consider the lilies of the field, they toil not.*"

For ceremonial marketing you may try the lower end of Brick Lane on the verge of the Russian and Polish quarter. There is a touch of irony in the situation of this market. It lies under the shadow of that gigantic folly, Columbia Market, which was the gift of Baroness Burdett-Coutts, who, with that lack of understanding that distinguishes her type, was always giving the poor what they didn't want. That market is now let out in tenements, and Brick Lane is the real People's Market. It is a mixed market, and serves all household wants, but it makes no song about itself. Something of the

settled melancholy of the tribes of Eastern Europe hangs over it, and the faces of the shoppers are not London faces. Strange foods appear on the stalls, smoked meats are in demand, and curious achievements in sausage form decorate the shop-windows. Costume, too, does not follow London or Paris models, but moves waywardly about alien standards. The stall-holders use little voice. They do not cry. They do not sing. They do not even wheedle. They are passive. They stand at their stalls, like beggars at the temple gates, awaiting your charity. They inveigle with the eye rather than summon, and invite by their pathos rather than by their goods.

Purchasing here is not the blithe brisk business of Lavender Hill or Salmon Lane, whose "Take it or leave it" means what it says; it partakes of the leisurely chicanery of the Orient. If you pay the price asked you are set down for a discourteous fool and despised accordingly. In this market the attitude of "Take it or leave it" is an invitation to the waltz—an opening for the intricate interplay of bargaining; and when, after long minutes, a deadlock is reached, the prospective purchaser will go away and return later and reopen the matter; and depart again, and again return, until he or the vendor is exhausted. How a man prospers who conducts his business with this large contempt of time I do not know; I can only suppose that the ultimate profit amply covers him. Certainly he seems to do better than the abrupt Cockney, whose slogan is "Small Profits, Quick Returns."

A happy hunting-ground for those who find

amusement in the foibles of their fellows is afforded by the midday bazaar of Leather Lane. There the hungry office-boy may feed, and the odd minutes of the clerk's luncheon-hour may be most pleasantly, though unprofitably, spent. Nothing is here of solid value, but much to tempt the eye. In this narrow lane with its lasting odour of vegetable refuse, elderly professors will sell you the Elixir of Life at a shilling a box; shabby young men will sell you the Secret of Success in Business; venerable and eloquent seniors, whose equally venerable linen is eloquent of a misspent youth, will give you (yes, *give* you) the winner for the Big 'Un to-morrow. They are not asking for money. They are sportsmen, and, when they've got a good thing, they like to share it with other sportsmen. One might think that they could save themselves a lot of trouble by shouting their Good Thing to the crowd at large; but that is not their way. Apparently they like the formality and ritual of the intimate chat with the True Sportsman. They like to deliver their good news in sealed envelopes, lest it get into profane hands that would show it no respect; and to receive from their beneficiaries some token of his True Sporthood.

Elsewhere, you will find brisk young gentlemen who have apparently taken a course of lessons in "How to Become a Convincing Talker," and now, in tones that ring with sincerity, offer you one guinea fountain-pens at two-and-six, or gold watches, sleeve links, solid leather wallets, at the price of a lunch. These do good business; but the book-stalls, the

haberdashery stalls, and the broken-iron stalls, having little excitement to offer for the splendid shilling, suffer by this insidious competition. People would always rather waste their money on an empty thrill or a humorous swindle than spend it wisely on solid value. No right-minded hawker displays gingerbread without gilt.

Here indeed are noise and talk in excess. You catch the true accent of Bartholomew Fair. "Now, gentlemen, I c'n see 'at you're all sportsmen 'ere, and they're the men I like to talk to. Now don't run away—I ain't goin' ter talk abaet meself—I don't 'ave to. Ev'body round 'ere knows me. I'm Ogtrot, the jockey, and you gentermen that remember the Lincolnshire of '89 don't need no more'n that. I retired a long time ago, but I still keep in touch. Now listen—the Leger comes on in a week. Very well. Now I'm not arstin' f'r any money: all I arst is that when you draw *your* money you deal fair by me. Now is that straight or ain't it? If you boys don't keep baeck I'll clip yer ear-'oles. . . . Now listen . . .

"These boxes of choc'lits what I 'ave 'ere er sold in the shops at ten shillin's a box. Ten shillin's, laydiss. But, owing to my investin' several thousand paends in the purchase of a bankrup' stock, I'm offerin' 'em at—what?—at two shillin's the box, laydiss. Ten-shillin' boxes of choc'lits, at two shillin's. Every box I sell means a dead lorss to me, but I ain't worrying about thaet. It pays me by making me name known. Yor'll find me 'ere every daey, an' I know 'at when you've dealt with old George once yor'll come back. . . . Pass 'em

up, Fred. 'Nother one over there—laydy in blue 'at. . . . I don't sell duds, laydiss. No 'alf-filled boxes 'ere. Examine every one of 'em. No dummies. No throw-out samples. No dud stuff in faked boxes, but the Real Thing. Ten shillin's fer two shillin's."

And betweenwhiles you will certainly have your sleeve plucked by the gentleman with the green baize apron, in the furniture-moving line, who has found a gold and diamond scarf-pin in the van. He doesn't know to which job it belonged, and if he takes it to the police they may think he's pinched it, him being a rough-looking sort. But perhaps *you*, sir, might find it worth a shilling or two. He doesn't understand these things, but it looks valuable, and he'd be quite ready to accept a trifle, to save himself trouble.

Then the gracious cultivated voice of the white-haired professor. Between finger and thumb he holds a small bottle.

" . . . and I may say that for fifteen years, from boyhood, I scarcely ate one meal without discomfort. Dyspepsia was slowly undermining my constitution. I will only ask you to use the evidence of your eyes and look at me now. And how was I cured ? Not by doctors, gentlemen. And not by patent medicines. But by *Nature's* remedy. Yes, gentlemen, I am not offering you here any product of the chemist's laboratory. This is no quack nostrum, sirs. No !—What I hold in my hand is the essence of what the poet has called the kindly fruits of the earth. Here are herbs, gentlemen ; the roots of Mother Nature. I have sold these remedies

in this district for fifteen years, gentlemen; and wherever I go once I can go again without challenge or question. One shilling, sir—thank you—thank you, sir—thank you!"

But in the domestic markets—as at Kentish Town and East Ham—there is no opportunity for gilding; the goods must stand forth naked and unabashed. The most convincing of Convincing Talkers cannot lend glamour to a horse-hair sofa with a six-inch rent in the seat or give grace to a chest of drawers lacking one drawer and all the handles. Pots and pans and brooms and garden tools must go or stay on their patent utility. These markets are therefore quieter than any—not from the temperament of the shoppers and stall-holders, or from the spirit of the place, but because vocal efforts of publicity and challenge and ornamentation are waste of time and breath. Window-dressing is vain. A bath with a hole in it is just that and nothing more. It has no "talking points." It sells for what it is, and there is no deep-debated bargaining in the sale. Things here are what they seem. "Persian" rugs, "Axminster" carpets, "Benares" ware, deny their labels to your face; and for the rest there is no opportunity of camouflage. Popular songs of ten years ago and *bric-à-brac* from Birmingham have nothing to say for themselves; and they do not say it.

Among the Sunday markets, of which Middlesex Street is the chief, Club Row (Bethnal Green) is unique. This is the cage-bird and feathered animal market, and much talk and knowing glance accompanies the business deals. Your bird fancier is much "wider" than your

housewife. He does not buy a bird in a cage, or a pig in a poke, without close scrutiny and chaffering. Parrots, parakeets, canaries, 'finches—all species of birds are offered here. And the singing competitions of rival aviaries are occasions for much invective and much book-making. The man who "fancies" his bird materialises his fancy into terms of cash.

But the best days of Club Row are gone. It is falling off, like Middlesex Street and Caledonian Market. Soon it will belong to that group of derelict markets which are now markets in name only—Columbia Market (Bethnal Green), Cumberland Market (Kentish Town), Mortimer Market (Bloomsbury), Shepherd's Market (Mayfair), Clare Market, Cloth Fair. But, although vested interests are moving against them, I hope it will be long before the street markets are abolished.

The pavement hawkers have already received notice that, while old licences will be renewed, no new licences will be issued, and this is no doubt the first flourish of the campaign.

Don't we all remember Ludgate Hill on Christmas Eve, when the penny-toy pedlars stood shoulder to shoulder on the south side of the hill, and grown-ups and children packed the pavement with delight, and the squeaking toys squeaked, and the trumpets trumped, and the rattles rattled, and the hawkers hawked? Well, they were soon moved on at the wish of selfish and grasping shopkeepers, who have no time for the "live and let live" spirit. Ludgate Hill then was the home of Santa Claus, and a very child's heaven. It was filled with the

warmth of a nursery party—all jolly and free and slapdash and childish. How different the crowded, fusty toy bazaars of the Stores, and their solemn atmosphere, and the stolid assistant who demonstrates, with perceptible lack of interest, the mechanical toys. I would like to get up a Children's Crusade for the return of the pedlar and the perpetual survival of the street-market.

They make an appeal which shops can never make. When "all goods are marked in plain figures," the element of surprise is eliminated; and it is just this possible surprise that draws the crowds to the stalls. That, and their colour.

For, at twilight, when the naphtha flares are lit, the lane of stalls becomes a fair, and the sedate step that is fitting to the shop seems foolishly out of place. One wants to hop, skip or jump through these arcades of exultant light. And one does. The routine of shopping is not only made a pleasure; it becomes a carnival; and the wanderer, like myself, who is seldom concerned with shopping, may here revel like Haroun Alraschid, in Baghdad, or like de Quincey in Little Earl Street, Seven Dials, and see wonders, and rub shoulders with romance, and come very close to the common heart of humanity.

In the Streets of Cyprus-on-Thames

A trip to Cyprus sounds beguiling. At the suggestion one visualises green seas, white coasts, and blue moon-swept hours of Cyprian delight. But this Cyprus holds little of enchantment. You may reach it by omnibus from Piccadilly Circus or the Strand ; and when you have reached it you will take the next omnibus back.

It is an island site—all that it has to link it with the other Cyprus—in a district where the slatternly fields of Essex meet the draggled tail of the town. It faces the edge of Albert Dock, and is fretted with cold side-streets, which lead nowhere. The names of these streets carry dull echoes of the noise of past battle and stress—Cameron Street, Plevna Street, Beaconsfield Street, Livingstone Street. Each of these side-streets drops into a waste of ash-heap and half-made road. The houses back on to a wide but dismal prospect. It is spacious and airy, but the space is the space of desolation, and the air is laden with odours. Dust drivels in the air, or dances in corybantic circles ; black dust from the coal-sidings and grey grit from the stones. The prospect fades into bald corner-lots, broken fences, gasometers, and the embankments of a main sewer. The houses are low and cramped ; rabbit-hutches in brick ; and the people seem to be of their surroundings, of scrap iron and abandoned workings ; they have got so far with

a struggle, and no farther. About the streets and from the houses shuffle and peer pale women, faded by long toil, and with little appetite for life; and pale beautiful children run from school. Their keen-edged laughter has the tone of Japanese wind-bells in a railway station.

The front of Cyprus is Cyprus Place, by the edge of the Albert Dock, which bristles with scores of cranes, travelling and stationary, dilapidated sheds, and sheaves of chimneys tipped with flowers of smoke. Beyond the dock you may see from your upper window the scarred slopes of Woolwich and the heights of Shooter's Hill. Alongside the dock runs that narrow railway-track whose station-names are so evocative—Gallions, Manor Way, Central, Tidal Basin, Custom House. These names add bitterness to the general atmosphere. Cyprus itself is an ironical gibe. Only one spot here is aptly named—a little street near some allotments, named Savage Gardens.

Cyprus Place is the supply depôt of this curious colony, peopled by workers from the docks and the great gas-works. Here are fly-blown eating-houses, fly-blown "general" stores, a newspaper shop, a sweetstuff shop, a few second-hand dealers, and the Ferndale Hotel, the only pub in Cyprus.

It is many years since I first took a drink at the "Ferndale." It has changed little. It is still the one bright spot in Cyprus, but bright only by its glum background. It is kept to-day by Joe Lyons (nothing to do with tea-shops) and is a quiet, well-conducted house. There you may sit, under warm light, and listen to

the night wail of industry—the squalling syren, the melancholy hooter, and the gruff lullaby of the shunting engine ; and with them comes the smell of smoke and steam and dust. Here gather, from the bleak corners of Cyprus, heavy, dejected men, some in the garments of work, some spruced up by a wash and a change. But all are heavy. Talk is slow ; the easy interchange of gossip becomes here only grunts and nods. They are tired with the day's work, and they must be up early to-morrow. "The Early Breakfast House" in Beaconsfield Street opens its doors when most of London is abed.

The rhythm of life goes brokenly in Cyprus, for it is isolated socially as well as geographically. It is as segregated as a gipsy encampment. Its Sunday afternoon is one long wail of discontent that knows no solace. The cool tones of the piano are seldom heard. More fitting, economically and æsthetically, are the acid notes of the gramophone and the wrangle of the harmonium, which nightly embitter the troubled air of Cyprus, the Island of Delight!

. . . . . .

Yet Cyprus is to me a place of strange colour, for it was in this district that I took my first pipe (really four pipes) of chandoo. It was the result of a casual encounter with a brown Oriental on the bridge crossing the dock. He was an old man, and his parchment face won me by its honesty and engaging whimsy. We stood for some minutes, exchanging broken chit-chat, when he asked abruptly if I had tasted the Great Tobacco. I hadn't. He promised me plenty amusement. I was young then,

and ardent for curious and cunning experience. Everything once. I believed him, and went with him to a cottage in a side street about Gallions.

I remember that journey very clearly.

It was a cold gusty night of March. We started from Cyprus at chucking-out time, when the Ferndale was urging the last of its lingering customers to the dark pavement. They stood there in clamant bunches. Squalls of argument and hot profanity broke from the corner. A street organ drew up and sent its tintinnabulation through the stress of the crowd and the hooting and shrieking of the docks. Young girls scampered from by-ways, and an ungainly dance began. Their hair flew grotesquely about them. Their gaping boots kicked up the March mud. On the fringe of the circle hovered evil shapes. Through their towzled hair the girls leered back at the faces with knowledgable eyes.

But my brown man plucked my sleeve with promise of gentler things, and I followed him through long lanes of bright windows, through broken streets, past the oozing windows of fried-fish bars, into pools of light and out into unlamped darkness; through all the tossing and turning of the city before it settles for the night.

At last we halted, and he took my hand and led me through the open door of a cottage, up a short flight of squeaky stairs, and into a dark room. I stood still while he fiddled about and found matches and candle. The room reeked with acrid fumes; yet, because of what I had heard, it seemed to me that this sombre odour held invitation to delight. From another room, or next door, came sounds of querulous nagging

in a woman's voice, with a random rumble of protest from a man, and the sudden scream of a child shot over the dark houses. When the light came I looked about me. I cannot clearly describe the room ; I have only a blurred memory of it. I was worked up by the little adventure itself, and still more by the wonder of the Great Tobacco. It seemed a chilly shrine. It was the ordinary tiny bedroom of the workman's cottage, and my immediate impression was of a prevailing greyness. The floor was grey, the window-curtain was grey, the ceiling grey, the dirt was grey. Even the attenuated candle-light held a quality of cold grey. I seemed to breathe greyness. On the floor lay a mattress. A couple of chairs, a table, and some odd utensils completed the furniture.

My brown friend went to a small cupboard and brought the lay-out, which I had not seen before—the pipe, the lamp, the tin of opium, and the instrument called the yen-hok. He lit the lamp, took a small portion of stuff from the tin, and held it against the flame. Smoke came from it, pungent and bitter-sweet. Then he kneaded it and deposited it in the pipe. I watched him closely. The business was fascinating to me, and he made of it a gracious ceremony. Each gesture at each stage seemed to be the deft and right gesture, and to each he gave significance. It is in this beautiful business of approach that your opium smoker rises above the vicious tricks of your cocaine slave. He stands to the sniffer as the connoisseur of claret to the dram-drinker, for the White Poppy holds in essence the radiant serenity of the heart

of Asia, and the peace of its pastures and the cold grace of its people. The cocaine-taker wants only a jag and gets it in the easiest and quickest way. He scamps the slow rites and ceremonies of the pipe, the cooking and kneading, and the trimming of the lamp. One vulgar sniff and his business is done. His is a vice of the uncivilised, and has no following in the land of courtesy and grace and delicate pomp. It is like dining off concentrated meat tablets; like coming down to breakfast unshaven; like taking exercise in the bath-room; like studying English literature in Bits of the Best Books. To approach these things casually is profanity; they deserve preparation and care. One should come gently and properly habited to them; not rush against the gates with a schoolboy's sniff.

Three more "pills" my gentleman worked in the same way. Then he handed me the pipe, pointed to the bed, and left me. The apparatus of the business was as interesting as the preparation. I dallied with the pipe and inspected it well before using it. It was a cunning piece of work. The stem was of bamboo overlaid with ivory. The mouthpiece and bowl were of porcelain. Below the mouthpiece was wreathed a cluster of blue silk tassels. The flat rim of the bowl was chased with Chinese ideographs. Up the stem from bowl to mouthpiece marched a procession of Chinese water-carriers, each one distinctive in pose and dress. They stood out from the wood, sharply cut and sharply realised. It was like a flash of China, a captured moment of late afternoon outside the gates of a city imposed in little upon this pipe in this back-

street room of Gallions. I looked and looked upon them until they seemed to move. I could see the swinging water-jars and hear the tinkle of wind-bells and smell the hot sleepy dust.

Then I lay down, and took my first draw. The shock of it set me coughing and spluttering. I hadn't expected *that*. I don't know what I had expected, but I hadn't expected anything like the aroma of mildewed Irish plug. Still, I decided to persevere; and after a few more whiffs I found the trick of it. I sucked slowly and gently until the first pill was spent; and then suddenly I was seized with wave after wave of discomfort, swimming and throbbing, which lasted some minutes. I was then ready and anxious to go home; and yet, when it had passed, I felt that I had been done. This couldn't be all that there was in the Great Tobacco. No, I wouldn't be done. I believed in the potency of the spirit of the white poppy, and I wanted my money's worth. I took the second pellet, and drew upon it with a sort of fearful determination. Soon all feeling of nausea passed. A deep droning began in my ears. I drowsed, and the drowsiness lapped me and soothed me, as one is soothed in a hot bath after a day's walking. My senses purred. I had achieved the supreme moment of the white poppy: a harmony of mind and body; a sustained awareness of peace and of power. I wanted nothing; I possessed all. I could write the perfect sonnet. I could compose the great music-drama. I could lead an army to victory. I could conquer the world with a

gesture. I knew I could do these things, but the ineffable peace that enwrapped me was so sweet, so potent, that action seemed foolish and gross.

I took the third pill. When that was done, the pipe slipped from me, and I was too comfortable to reach for it. I lay quiet, my eyes fixed on the blue flame of the lamp. After a while I noticed that the flame was growing in height, and expanding in radiance until it seemed a monstrous curved fan, enveloping my face. It came nearer, and seemed to close in; then, suddenly, the centre split into rainbow hues, and life moved within it. The hues resolved themselves into one—blue—and I was in a flowered garden where a blue moon threw its light upon such loveliness that my lips opened to it. In the forefront of the garden lay a wide lawn, midmost of which stood a gilded temple of many turrets and windows, and from turret and window looked out strange figures moving lazy arms. (Why does opium always evoke pavilions and palaces?) Then, it seemed there came the sudden stroke of a gong, whose vibrations spread before me in a thousand ripples of coloured light; and, at the stroke, windows and turrets were empty, and the figures poured as a cascade of strange shapes to the lawn before the temple. And there they flowed and gathered themselves, and then smiled and danced to tunes played by running water; and strange odours rose from the grass and the flower beds, and these odours floated in the air as strings of lighted lanterns. The functions of the senses were interchanged. Perfume became

visible; colour could be heard; sound could be felt.

It seemed that my mind divided itself. I knew that I was looking into that garden, and I knew that I was lying on my back on a hard mattress in the cottage of a brown man met at Cyprus. By this very division of the mind, I knew that the Great Tobacco was working. Then my mind became one, and I was in the garden. The lissome dancers gathered about me in a cloud of strange shapes, and, at a closer view, I saw that their eyes were mournful with too much beauty, and they seemed to be speaking, and they shone so clearly as to be alive to every sense but touch. Sharper and sharper grew the detail of the scene against the blue dusk. The contour of a cheek, the iris of an eye, the beating of a pulse of these trance-figures leapt clear before me, until the beauty of the whole was dimmed by the magnificence of detail. Colour became a creature. A scarlet sash about a waist assumed a character of itself, and a foam of lace about a dancer's shoulders lived apart from what it decked.

There were voices, multitudinous dim voices and following feet; and then a massive figure, robed in grey, moved from the pavilion, and tumult spread about the garden, and fear. As I looked upon this scene of panic, I saw my thoughts running before me like little brooks, and they were beaten back by the thoughts that ran from the massive figure that had broken the joy of the garden and filled it with the fear of old midnight legends. Then the garden cleared.

But one figure remained, a figure that looked with strange gravity at me, appealingly, and

not at the figure before the pavilion, and moved towards me; the figure of a young girl. At the same moment the strange figure moved towards her, and, as he moved, the dancer turned, saw, and fled. Through the dark thickets of the garden she went fleetly, hotly followed; and, as I watched their flight, the light of the garden changed softly from blue to amber, and again to gold, and again to a pale light that was not of sun or moon. Through lanes of flowers and brakes of bush the little one led him, and though the monster ran as none ever ran he could not reach her. Down mossy paths and through dim dells she ran. About her hung a filmy raiment of a green that is known to the rainbow. Her curls streamed about her face. Her white feet fled across the grass like flashes of a lantern; and now the monster would be upon her, and now with a turn she would be far from him.

And then, in a clearing of green grass spangled with flowers that twinkled with changing hues, the light grew dim and chill as a midwinter dawn, and she stumbled among the flowers, and trembled, and fell. . . . And as she fell there came a crash of drums and a storm of brass bugles, and he stretched a great arm to her shoulder. Melancholy brown darkness closed in upon the garden. The darkness shrank and shrank into itself until it became resolved into a speck of pallid blue flame in a candle-lit room, where I lay in headache. The woman next door was screaming. The man's voice rumbled on. An engine bellowed in the sidings, and a Salvation Army band blared, and a big brown figure was shaking me by the shoulder.

In the Streets of Good Company

Upon a dull morning Monk and I sat round the fire, and diverted ourselves with making choice of London's good taverns. It seemed a trivial topic of the moment, yet when lunch was announced we had covered many square miles of London, and were still going.

A bar does not become a bar by the granting of a licence ; it grows slowly. It has its first period, its second period, its maturity, and its decline. It gathers about it a crowd, and the aggregate spirit of that crowd gives it its " note." Let one member of that crowd be affronted or dishonoured, and the whole crowd forsake that house, and find another and there re-create their circle ; and the old house is never the same. It becomes arid, spiritless. Virtue is gone out of it, and its only hope is that a new crowd will gather and make it a rendezvous. We all know bars of this kind—eclipsed bars, waiting upon their second period. They are sorry places. They are like hotel bars and railway-station bars, which are not inns, but mere drinking-places.

An equally important factor in the success of a bar is its landlord. You cannot have a good bar without good company, and only a good landlord can attract the good company. A man of character can change a derelict tavern, which all men shun, into a centre of bright and sober intercourse; and the man of unkind shape might

take over the most prosperous and popular bar and have it empty within a week.

One is conscious, at first entry, of the spirit of a bar. There are bars where the stranger is welcomed, and bars where he is shown that he isn't wanted; bars where the assistants are courteous, and bars where they serve you without looking at you. The staff derive their manner from the landlord and the regular crowd; and from sharp-tempered service you may deduce evil company. The bar that is attended by barmen is always better than that attended by barmaids. Your barman is not so self-centred as the girl, and does not demand attention, or indulge his whims on you, or ignore one in favour of another. You can talk to him as man to man, but around the barmaid there is a barbed-wire barricade of excessive self-esteem, and you often run against it without knowing it.

For your landlord—he should have an equable temper, and a pleasant face for all. He should have the tact and discretion of the London policeman; the dignity of the merchant; the geniality of the man-about-town; and a certain professional "something" which cannot be put into words—a touch of manner that marks him landlord as other touches mark a man solicitor or bishop.

There are bars in central London for all moods but some of the kindliest houses are to be found in the near suburbs—Shepherd's Bush, Hammersmith, Kensington, Whitechapel, Poplar, Wapping, Ratcliff, Highgate, Islington. Cavour's bar, in Leicester Square, is a pleasant little room, well appointed for an occasional gossip;

and the upstairs room at Henekey's, in the Strand, is the best place I know for rumination. You may sit in a sturdy rush-bottomed armchair at an old oak table set with a pewter jug, under the warmth of a great seventeenth-century-style fireplace, and look through diamond-paned windows upon the Strand's business, and be as tranquil as in your own study. For company there are the Bedford Street Bodega, which is finding itself again, and the new Rule's, which I have described earlier; De Hem's, off Shaftesbury Avenue, the haunt of film-actors; the "Man in the Moon," in Vine Street, where real detectives gather and talk of crime as merchants talk of commodities. "Not much crime about just now." "No—very slow." And the basement bar of Jones's, Leicester Corner, where gathers daily the most nondescript and roguish-looking crowd in London. Another favourite of mine is Shereef's Wine Lodge, under the arches of Ludgate Hill, where you may order "goblets" of champagne. I never care for champagne, and I don't much care for Shereef's; the rumbling of the trains worries conversation; but I often go there for the delight of ordering a "goblet." For a taste of High Life there are the "Rose and Crown" by Park Lane, "The Running Footman" in Charles Street, and the "Grapes" in Shepherd Market.

Here gentlemen's gentlemen and other indoor servants are to be seen, and sometimes heard. But as a class they are aloof and taciturn, and keep themselves *to* themselves. There are bars for butlers, bars for footmen, and bars for chauffeurs. Disorder is unknown there. The

atmosphere is subdued; conversation is murmured. It is high life of the "Young Visiters" sort. The topics are of sober import—whether "ours" are going to the Moors this year; whether "he" is likely to obey the order of the court and return to "her"; or whether "yours" are selling the country house. The butler is easily recognised, but the footman and the valet are changed by war-service. They are no longer the soft things they once were. They are become fully masculine, and, though they still wear a sleek, clothes-brush air, they carry themselves as other men and are not labelled Yellow-plush. They might be bank clerks or shop assistants; there is nothing to mark them from their fellow-servants, the chauffeurs.

But the butler is as he always was. Butlers never change and never develop. I think they are born butlers. A man does not seem to slide into the gravity of butlerdom from sprightly first-footmanity. He seems to have been always a butler; to have been conceived in gravity and born with a corkscrew in his hand. He regards the world with benignant severity. He is the polished plebeian, who does with a gentlemanly air things that no gentleman would do. He is like a critic: he knows precisely how every trick should be done, but he cannot do it. He is a master of Form, without understanding it. He takes a glass of beer with a gesture that belongs to old brandy, and his feeling towards his footman is crystallised in the phrase: "these young fellers." He is a Petronius Arbiter of Taste, and speaks more candidly of the errors and failings of "ours" and their visitors than

a mother does of other people's children. At the same time, he borrows much reflected interest from them. If their interest is the Turf, he is an authority on racing. If it is literature, he can talk like Mr. Edmund Gosse. If his people are City people, his talk is an expansion of the Stock Exchange Daily Official List, and he follows fearfully the fluctuations of Mexican Oils.

I once had occasional acquaintance with an ex-butler who frequented the "Running Footman." He had the true butler manner, and at first glance you would have sworn he was Lord Curzon. His people had been musical, and he possessed all their information on music, without their knowledge. But his talk was to me a malicious delight. Your butler, you see, if he be gifted with an observant eye, has large opportunities for critical appreciation. He sees your guests more clearly and swiftly than you. He has them all taped. His field of observation affords him a wide knowledge of men, and he can sketch you this or that guest with wondrous fidelity. In the dining-room men are off their guard, and, if the butler is a true butler, nobody is conscious of his presence. But he's there, and that downcast eye is ever at work, noting foibles and unconscious revelations. And my butler had used his opportunities.

"Always entertaining, they was—three nights a week. Funny-looking people they used to have, too. Eccentric, y'know. But so interesting. As soon as they began to talk, you forgot how funny-looking they was—they was that interesting. There was a man they used to

'ave very often. I couldn't make him out at all. Composer they said 'e was, but you'd never a-thought it. Looked more like Eugene Stratton. Very nice fellow, though, and ours seemed to think quite a lot of him. . . . But the man that give me the jumps was that Sims Reeves. 'Ow people put up with 'im, I *don't* know. Enough to drive anybody mad. They'd find out before they invited 'im what 'e fancied, and then 'er ladyship would arrange a nice little dinner of this and that—'Mr. Sims Reeves' favourites'—and then either 'e didn't turn up at all, or else 'e'd say 'e'd prefer a grilled herring, if it wasn't any trouble. Trouble! Fat lot 'e cared about trouble. I tell you, young man, I used to fair dread the nights 'e was coming. Up and down, all the bally evening. Bell going all the time. 'Give Mr. Reeves this'—or 'Get Mr. Reeves that.' And then the business when 'e went away—'alf a dozen silk scarves round 'is throat, muffling 'im up 'ere, and tying 'im up there—and then, mind you—not a word of thanks. Not so much as a thrip'ny bit. . . . But Patti. Now there was a woman. You didn't mind taking extra trouble for 'er. She appreciated it so. And didn't talk to you as though you was nothing, but just like one man to another. I always see that she was well looked after, and she always looked after me. Always a pleasant word when she was going away, and never less than half a sovereign. And there was an old fellow used to come, and play the fiddle. And 'e could play, too. You may 'ave 'eard of 'im. A famous man, 'e was. Jarkim, they called 'im, or some such name. 'E

was often there, and got to know me. 'E was very partial to our old brown sherry, and 'e always used to give me an eye, as much as to say 'You know what I like.' . . . Yes, you get all sorts to deal with, young man, and you'll notice that some people it's a real pleasure to look after, whether they give you anything or not, while with others, even if they drop a sovereign in your hand, they do it in such a way that you don't care whether they're looked after or not. . . . Well, here's my very best respects!"

Until lately there was an excellent cricket centre in St. Martin's Street—where many publishers live—the "Horse and Dolphin" kept by Len. Braund, once of Somersetshire. The walls of the saloon held camera records and cartoons of all the great battles of other years, and Len, who was always on the reception side of the bar, gathered to his house many of the young amateurs and professionals of to-day. The public-house, as a business, seems to attract the ex-cricketer. I recall that Richardson kept one, and Brockwell was for a time a landlord; and I believe others were in the trade. Recollection and anecdote and demonstrations of miraculous strokes made every hour of Braund's bar noisy. But cricket-talk, indeed any sport-talk, is, for me, an infliction, and recollections of Lord's and the Oval less interesting than recollections of the proceedings of the Hornsey Borough Council. Your sportsman, when not engaged in his sport, is no very bright company. I prefer the more catholic houses, in whose bars all types gather, like the "Claren-

don" at Hammersmith, the "Prospect of Whitby" and the old "Town of Ramsgate" at Wapping, the eighteenth-century "Hoop and Grapes" in Whitechapel High Street, Blockey's in Jermyn Street, where the taxi-men dine, and the old "Green Gate," Barking Road, where the ancient and beguiling game of shove-ha'p'ny may be played. This is a village inn on a main road crowded with tram-cars, buses, and lorries. It is a wooden structure, with a wide cart-sweep, set with trestle-tables, and there on fine days the carters sit with their drinks and their dinners, making a Morland mezzotint in the thick of London. And that name recalls a delightful suburban house where he was known —the old "Bull" at Highgate.

The very name of George Morland is a nosegay of old cottage flowers. It evokes the genial curves of the English countryside : bridle roads, rough farm-yard smells, lamp-lit interiors, the confusion of inns, and buxom, apple-blossom girls. By no other artist are we so cordially introduced to the life of our country roads, for no other artist is so intensely English and so sympathetic to the common people. There were other artists of his time who strove to interpret the rustic poor ; but with these one is somewhat aware of a condescension, of the fine gentleman patting the coachman's child on the head. Half the charm of Morland's work lies in the fact that he saw his subjects on the level : he was instinctively *of* them.

Born in circumstances which the world calls "comfortable," he found his true comfort only among the rude and simple ; and painted the

subjects that he loved. In taverns, stables, farm-yards, he was at home, and there his ingenuous brush discovered and presented to us beauty as bright as any that drawing-rooms have held. Elegance and tepid culture were not for him: he chose the plain, blunt man. Naturally, in a period when class distinctions were even more sharply marked than now, this choice brought him much mean and envious detraction. Each of his contemporaries has had a fling at him, and even his biographers find it hard to refrain from censure. Says J. T. Smith, author of "A Book for a Rainy Day":

> "His companions were jockeys, ostlers and carters, money-lenders and gipsies, yet [I like this "yet"] he was a man by no means wanting in sense or information; and I am certain, had he embraced the friendship of those persons of intellect and sound integrity who wished to serve him, he might have been an ornament to Society."

Well, which would you be—an ornament to Society or George Morland? To our delight, Morland made his choice; and we may be sure that he found among his "low" companions unclouded graciousness and fine feeling in as large measure as could be found in those others. "Low" company is not for the mean-spirited; they fear its candours, and fly from it to their drawing-rooms and dissembling gestures. To its large qualities of heart they are insensible. But Morland saw and knew, and did not fear or despise. He saw dogs, horses, children, and drunkards as God sees them.

A born roamer, he lived in many spots of

London and country, and in none long ; and wherever he went he gathered about him merry company. Himself cheerful, he generated high spirits in others. Certainly, many of his companions were spongers, preying upon him ; but the sponger is found in all circles, and the warm-hearted genius of Morland would have been marked down for prey in salons as in taverns.

Unfortunately, most of his traceable haunts are now demolished ; and it is, therefore, with something of a thrill that the lover of Morland discovers the little Highgate tavern that knew him well, and that still retains much of his gay-footed spirit and free-voiced laughter. At "The Bull," on North Hill, Highgate, Morland lived for some months, having sought the country air on a threat of illness. It was then, no doubt, a place exactly suited to his hungry sociability ; for North Hill in those days was part of the Great North Road, clamorous with traffic of horse and mail-coach and post-chaise ; and it is said that Morland knew every coachman, guard, and postboy on the route. Often he would board a coach at "The Bull," and accompany it well into Hertfordshire (sketch-book in hand, you may be sure) returning to Highgate by the up-mail.

To-day "The Bull" is much as it was when he was its guest. Minor structural alterations have been made, but it is still a wayside inn. It stands back from the road, inn-fashion, fronted by a small gravel sweep. A flowered porch marks the entrance to the saloon. It is a low-pitched building, of two stories only, the upper rooms lighted by two narrow windows of Georgian

type. The bars are small, low-ceilinged, and snug. They exude that rich, ripe smell that never can be counterfeited. It is compounded, I think, of many decades of smoke and human kindliness and the outdoor perfumes of years; a whiff of the pleasant spirits of the past, promising good company and entertainment.

In its public bars you may meet to-day descendants, I fancy, of the men with whom Morland drank. The customers of "The Bull" still have about them an air of the field and the stable. Still you may witness from its windows such sights as Morland witnessed: smocked drovers from Hertfordshire worrying their way up North Hill with flocks of sheep, or glum-faced cows, and halting awhile at "The Bull," if the hour be propitious. Nay! I would say that the spirit of Morland still influences the place; for about the walls of the bars I have noticed many home-made bills, in red and blue lettering, announcing hours of openings, beer prices, whisky prices, etc; and, when I remarked upon the neatness of the execution, I was told that they were the work of one of the four-ale customers, who drew payment for them in kind. Even so did Morland—and other artists, before and since—paint pictures in discharge of tavern reckonings.

That Morland could, in the vulgar phrase, "shift it," is shown by one day's drinking, recorded, item by item, in his diary:

MORLAND'S BUB FOR ONE DAY.

Hollands Gin	Porter
Rum and Milk	Bottled Porter
Coffee	Punch

Hollands
Porter
Shrub
Ale
Hollands and Water
Port Wine and Ginger
Bottled Porter
Port Wine (at dinner and after)
Porter
Ale
Opium and Water
Port Wine (at supper)
Gin and Water
Shrub
Rum (on going to bed)

One would like to connect this tremendous orgy with the country air of "The Bull," rather than with the hot, crowded precincts of a London gin-house; but the fact is, it was celebrated at Paddington. Still, "The Bull" to-day maintains something of the same robust manners, so far as the times allow. A cutting from a recent issue of the local paper, pasted up in the saloon bar, is testimony of this. It relates to a court charge of drunkenness:

MAGISTRATE: Any explanation to offer?
PRISONER: I had two glasses of old Burton.
MAGISTRATE: Old Burton? Where can you get old Burton nowadays?
PRISONER: You can get a good drop of old Burton at "The Bull."

Tom, the present landlord of "The Bull," is just such a fellow as Morland would have loved: cheerful, apt in business, pleasingly garrulous, with bright words of welcome for all comers. "Beer to your liking, sir? . . . That's the style. I like to see a man *enjoy* his beer." But I do wish he would take a little more interest in Morland. Again and again I have begged him to introduce into his bars some little touch that should celebrate Morland's association with the house; even a few cheap process reproductions

would serve as a gesture of recognition of the man whose memory sent many distinguished callers to the house—among them, Cruikshank, Millais, and Landseer. But no ; the saloon is still decorated with whisky advertisements and clumsy studies of Dickens characters ; and I have almost given up hope of exciting him on the subject. It is not as though expense or trouble were involved : every tinkering little picture-shop keeps Morland reproductions at trifling sums.

Perhaps, however, the printed word may have more effect than my spoken words ; and maybe, when Tom reads this protest, he will recognize his duty, and will walk across the road and pay his homage to the *genius loci* before it is too late. For " The Bull " may not long remain as it is. Another old inn, opposite and a little to the south of " The Bull," known as the " Wrestlers," has lately been reconstructed. Happily, many of its old features have been worked-in. The bar parlour has been little altered, and the huge Jacobean fire-place, with its leaning mantel, its six-gallon kettle, and its wide chimney have been cleverly retained in the new scheme. This is good, and rare ; we have before us to-day too many unhappy witnesses of what happens to old taverns when brewery companies reconstruct them.

" The Bull " is not the only good and cosy house of Highgate. There are the " Gate-House," " The Flask," and the " Angel." In the days when Highgate village was on the coach-road to the North it had nineteen inns, and even

to-day it is well served. Although it lies within the London Postal District and the Metropolitan Police area, it is still a village. It stands on the top of the steep Highgate Hill, and over its pavements obtrude the gnarled rustic porch of "The Angel" and the round-bellied front of the butcher's shop. When the tram-cars are not visible there is little to connect it with Suburbia ; rather, one thinks of a Jane Austen town. The high double kerb, the little leaning shops with their eighteenth-century windows, and the leisurely shoppers, belong more to the heart of the shires than to London.

Happy little shops they are. So few useful, so many admirable things, they sell. When you have counted the butchers and bakers and candlestick makers, there remain many of a kind found in no other suburb. There is the picture shop, its window filled with signed proofs and graceful etchings, whose owner maintains the village note by signing himself " your servant." There is the Health Food Shop, which assists you, for a few pence, to a simian dietary. There is Townsend's Yard, with its old red-roofed cottages, their windows gay with flower-boxes and creepers ; and its wide prospect of the Essex hills. There is the tiny mend-all shop and hospital for sick crockery, and there are frivolous hat-shops scattered freely, like urgent flappers, among their more placid fellows. And there was, until lately, a delightful shop where bronze plaques were to be had, kept by a kindly philosopher, friend of Henley and Stevenson and the giants of those days, who spent his time

beating epigrams and words of wisdom into bronze and brass.

A few steps down the Hill, northward, stands a group of sober Georgian houses, and near them the peaceful Pond Square, tacked to the main road by by-ways, and the Grove—also Georgian—and Waterlow Park. Here is Nell Gwyn's garden, evoking memories of oranges and lemans. From it one looks by day into London as a grey-green pool, dotted with iron reeds, or by night into an effusion of purple brushed with luminous yellow and spattered with gold. To the wooden benches outside "The Flask," which, village-like, is opposite the church, come still, as centuries ago, tired folk from London on Saturdays and Sundays, their exuberant jests breaking in ineffectual waves against the age-old peace that clings to the neighbouring houses. But on other days one may sit inside or outside the "Flask" in calm contemplation, with a mind at ease. This serenity and village charm of Highgate are, paradoxically, the result of Progress. In the high tide of coaching, the press of traffic was so great that a new road was cut from Holloway which gave less strain to the horses and showed a saving on the time-sheet. So, half a mile below and to the East, the new world clatters and toots, and leaves Highgate Village a little backwater, unruffled by its passage.

The chief inn is "The Gate-House," which sits properly at the head of the village, like a jolly host at the head of his table. This house was reconstructed some years ago to the model of its original, and, though the model was not so

closely observed as in the case of "The Wrestlers," the work was reasonably well done, and one can still identify its main saloon with the main saloon in Rowlandson's picture of the house. Its wide bay-windows command the exhilarating sweep of North Hill and once looked out upon a constant procession of coaches and "chaises." To-day its traffic could be controlled by a country constable, and you may sit in the bay-window and take your morning draught as peaceably as at any by-road inn. But its atmosphere is somewhat cold. It wants character. It has no "regulars," no daily intimate gathering of men, to endue it with personality and quaint differences.

I like best, of the Highgate inns, the "Angel." There indeed are cosiness and character. Its rustic porch and red blinds and stained glass give a welcome which the interior confirms. The saloon is a small room, whose ceiling a man of my low stature can touch. There are comfortable lounges and a good fire, and contemporary Hogarth prints and a dado of signed photographs of the theatrical celebrities of the 'eighties, whose names are not even names to this generation. There is a small billiards room and a still smaller smoking-room; and behind the bar are the old Highgate Horns, old pistols, lanthorns, and black-jacks. And the beer is good, my boy, and the company not without interest, having something of the atmosphere of the house itself. I know no other suburb so rich in old inns of the true type, no other suburb so rich in sharp-flavoured character and unsoftened idiosyncrasy. I don't care whether character

be surly, genial, wise, or foolish, so it be emphatic in tone and insistent. In this matter, this corner of Highgate (not the Shepherd's Hill corner) affords great joy. The village first attracted me by the exteriors of its old inns, and their encrusted charm, for I knew that within their walls I should find ripe character; I was not disappointed. These places gather characters about them as their walls and roofs gather moss. Men become themselves in these snuggeries, which afford the advantages of a club and much more personal freedom. They expand. They assert. They contradict. They shed the postures and opinions worn for the outside world, and stand revealed.

The "Wrestlers," too, is a good place, most good on a winter's night when its windows gush hearty light across the pavement. The company is good open-air company, ripe and exuberant. In the saloon bar is the great fire-place, roaring, on cold days, with a fire of logs, the right fuel for such a King Wenceslas fire-place; and a regular and pleasant evening company carries on the long tradition of hospitality and goodwill. In this bar are preserved the old horns, and a contemporary sketch showing the "spoof" ceremony of swearing the stranger on the horns and making him a freeman of Highgate, with liberty to call (and pay) for what he pleases. Both bars are set with oaken arm-chairs. The licence dates from the sixteenth century, and I like to think that the many landlords of past days beam approvingly upon Mr. Morris, their successor of to-day, for his continuance of the tale of

urbanity and welcome which they have passed to each other. It has a story that Charles II spent a night with it, when on his way to a rendezvous with Nelly at Barnet ; but, if that is true, it has happily lived down such regrettable associations. To-day it is a bright family place, with a family atmosphere ; and comfort and quietness are its note.

Then there is the Hermit of Highgate. There was in the fourteenth century a hermit at Highgate, a holy man, who, by Royal Charter, levied toll on all passengers ; but the present hermit is a gardener, who, in summer, labours full sixteen hours a day. He has a small estate on the east side of Highgate Hill, planted with fruit trees and fruit bushes, and he grows vegetables and flowers. On the estate is a battered red-tiled hut of the seventeenth century. It is a Robinson Crusoe hut. The planks of its wooden walls gape widely, and there are great clefts in the roof where wind and rain come in. This is his home, and there he lives, Crusoe-fashion, his only companions, his dogs, chickens, and bees. He cares nothing for the company of men. He prefers trees and flowers. They are at once his friends and his children, and he talks of them with parental pride. He places them highest in the scale of life. He rises with the sun and lies down with the sun. He sings in the local choir. And he lives joyfully, worshipping the sky and his family of trees and plants.

" Y'know, between you and me, I don't think God thinks a great deal of humanity. If you were a gardener, you'd see that flowers and trees are His favourites. See how He looks after

them! And He's right, too. They're worth it."

Good character is also to be found among the waterside inns at Wapping, Ratcliff, and Narrow Street. Good places these for Springtide carousals, especially "The Turk's Head," whose window reaches over the water and its moving life. The beer seems to drink more briskly in these places than in other streets. The sun and the water and the moving vessels—some outward bound, trimly, to distant seas; others lumbering home with the glamour of large adventure about them—and the sea-talk at the bar give a tang to the bitter and a smart touch to the thirst. There is a joyful house in West India Dock Road, where you turn for the Isle of Dogs. It has a large saloon bar, loaded with trophies from afar—strange birds from the Pacific hang, wings extended, from the ceiling, cunning weapons decorate the walls, and under glass cases are Buddhas, ivory statuettes, silks, and other rare oddments.

At nine o'clock most evenings it is packed with a finely mixed company, chiefly seamen, white and black, and their Fannies; and it bubbles with talk and swims with smoke. Hot talk it is too, suited to the somewhat makeshift appointments of the place. Its fixtures are faded and tarnished, and I imagine that the reason for the neglect is the keen press of custom, which leaves the staff never a minute for consideration of repairs and renewal. But those things don't matter. The company and the atmosphere are full compensation for the lack of grace-notes and flourishes. It is good deep company, brimming

over, with a head on it; for your seaman is usually either a great drinker or a rigid teetotaller. Restrictive morality cannot be served here. The boys are workers, and when they work they go into it full-heartedly, and so do they go into their evenings. They are avid for company and cheer, and they drink their beer as babies drink milk, and are no more the worse for it. Casual talk is as impossible here as in the middle of the Strand; you must either whisper at your friend's ear or bawl at him across neighbourly heads.

"Sorry, chum!" yelled a young stoker, whose elbows the crowd had forced into my ribs. He grimaced and grinned at me over the edge of his tankard. "Good drop o' beer this—eh? Best I've tasted f'r a long time. Real benefit night with sick pay. Ar! If my mother 'ad give milk as good as this, I'd never 'ave left 'er arms. What say—'aving another?"

We did. For to drink beer among good men is more blessed than to stand on a platform, with a glass of water and dirty the world with denials of its beauty. We remembered to each other the days when this place rang with song and music. But song and all natural delights are now forbidden by reformers in the pay of business men. The business men's theory is that by shutting off all rational enjoyments, and substituting tea and a game of ludo, they will get more work out of their servants, whom, like animals, they put through scientific tests of endurance, fatigue, feeding, and swift production. Let a perfectly sober man start a song in a tavern, even *piano*, and a voice cries in

affright—" Order there ! Quiet ! Want to get us into trouble ? " Even the penny electric piano has been banished from many East End pubs by the police, because it leads to *disorder ;* namely, singing. I would like to quote to the woeful brethren who make these orders a little song by one of the most spiritual of English poets :

Dear mother, dear mother, the church is cold ;
But the ale-house is healthy and pleasant and warm.
Besides I can tell where I am used well ;
The poor parsons with wind like a blown bladder swell.

But if at the church they would give us some ale,
And a pleasant fire our souls to regale,
We'd sing and we'd pray all the livelong day,
Nor ever once wish from the church to stray.

Then the parson might preach and drink and sing,
And we'd be as happy as birds in the spring ;
And modest Dame Lurch, who is always at church,
Would not have bandy children nor fasting nor birch.

And God, like a father, rejoicing to see
His children as pleasant and happy as He,
Would have no more quarrel with the Devil or the barrel,
But kiss him and give him both drink and apparel.

But your reformer never wants to re-form anything ; he wants only to suppress ; and all his agitations have a commercial origin. You can seldom get money for feeding the hungry (there's not much profit in that), but you can always get money for corrupting the spiritual civilisations of the East with the parvenu moralities of the West, or for discouraging the little pleasures of the poor. Zeal-of-the-land-Busy can always find backers. The vociferous teeto-

taller and the missionary are commercial travellers for the ignoble ends of their City subscribers, and the aim of their campaign is Increased Production and Expanded Trade, which is an *alias* for more money for themselves.

The parade of the teetotallers is really amusing. I do not know what strange virtue there is in refraining from a perfectly natural act that so unbalances a man, and makes him invent a name for himself ; but I have never met a teetotaller who did not talk, a little blandly, of his abstinence. He describes himself as " staunch," as though he were keeper of a charge. You don't hear the man who refrains from sexual intercourse going about vaunting his self-denial and calling love by hard names as these rude minds insult a noble Romanée Conti by calling it alcohol and the liquor traffic. You don't hear the unmarried woman calling herself a staunch virgin. Yet they have equal right to do so ; for if the teetotaller's line is that the tavern is a factor of misery, and should be suppressed, then even the purest sexual intercourse should be suppressed. For the abuse of sex has brought far more misery upon humanity than the abuse of wine. Yet, while we hear every day raucous voices raised against the tavern, we hear no bleat for compulsory castration.

Keep well away, my dears, from these paid pimps of bleak-minded business men, and their dishonest lobbying for prohibition under the disguise of temperance. They don't want to bring more beauty to your life or your surroundings, or to make things happier and healthier for you and your children. Their aim is to make

you work harder—for them. "Industrial Efficiency" is all that interests them; they have given the game away in their pamphlets. They are going to take away the only club you have, and will give you nothing in place of it. They are working behind your backs, and one morning you will wake up and find you may not have a glass of beer under dreadful penalties.

A lordly bishop has hopefully announced that, "as soon as the leaders of commerce and industry can be brought to see that prohibition is in their interests, they will enforce it on the country." So there you are, then. But you may be sure those leaders of commerce who are not teetotallers will not enforce it on themselves. It will work here as in America. The rich man will have his cocktails and bottle of wine with each meal; the poor man will not be allowed one glass of beer a week.

I have sat among them and heard their informal discussions of the matter and outlines of their unscrupulous plans of campaign, glibly formed with every circumstance of lie and deceit.

"No," said a very rev. Archdeacon, "the time is not ripe for the term Prohibition. It would only antagonise the country. We can lead them better by retaining the old title—Temperance—it sounds better to the general ear, and no suspicions are aroused. And I don't think we should direct our campaign at the people—yet awhile. It's the heads of industries and factories that we must get at. Once we've got them, the rest will follow."

One of these days there will be a great public occasion in England—the hanging of the two

enemies of civilisation—the millionaire and the missionary. They live hand in hand, and it is fitting that they should swing together. Until then, my child, live sanely ; interfere not with others, nor let them interfere with you.

> Come away with me, my child,
> To the bitter and the mild,
> With a tankard in each hand ;
> For the world's more full of kindliness
> Than they can understand.

Yes, and ginger is still hot in the mouth. Come away, then, to the "Grave Maurice," in Whitechapel, and the "Mrs. Grundy's Arms" off East India Dock Road, two pleasant discoveries of mine. I was first attracted to these places by their notable signs, but they're worth knowing for themselves, especially on Saturday evenings, when the marketeers take recess from labours. But the best of the East End houses is the "Black Lion," at East Ham, the most Continental bar in London. It is newly fitted with rustic alcoves, lit by electric lanterns ; it has a broad oaken gallery, similarly fitted ; it has a staff of waiters, a string band and a dancing floor. The tables will comfortably accommodate five hundred people, and it is in the best sense a family resort. It's a pity the West End can't take a lesson from the East Ham licensing justices, and give us a bar or two where we can have good music for the price of a drink.

I am not old enough to remember "Paddy's Goose" at Ratcliff, but that must have been a glorious hole, like that other pub that stood in Shire Lane, and bore the strangely evocative

name of "Smashing Lumber." The traditions of "Paddy's Goose" are of vermilion hue. In its time it was the worst of the dockside crimping dens, where seamen were hocussed, their pay drawn in advance, and themselves, incapable, put on board an outgoing vessel. It was also a haven for dock pilferers and other offenders, and had many obscure emergency exits. Now, it has swung to the opposite point. It is regenerated as a Seamen's Mission, a Coffee Palace and a Slate Club, and Princess Mary has danced a two-step upon its floors.

Slate Club!

How coldly the words travel down the spine. Say "night-club"—the stress-scheme is the same, but how different their descent upon the ear, and how swiftly the respectable pulse responds. It has been my pleasant duty once or twice to assist at the paying-out night of a Slate Club; and I say, from experience of both, that it was a much more pleasing function than any of your Murray's or Embassies or Desti's. On ordinary Saturday paying-in nights, the job is certainly a little tepid—a matter of sitting at a deal table in a somewhat chill and naked hall and receiving cash, entering the amounts in ledger and on card. But on paying-out night the Club drops its staid, actuarial manner and its gritty name, and becomes a real Club. The members come up in a bunch, then; fifteen hundred of them. The hall borrows warmth from the spirit of expectancy and the adumbration of fifteen hundred "good times" made by the accumulated cash on my table. I sit before it like a croupier at Monte Carlo, and

every player is a winner. I no longer feel insipid and commercial. Mine, for the moment, is the part of Scrooge on Christmas morning. Members at the far end of the queue joke among themselves, though they have never met before, and never joked on paying-in nights. Here and there a gust of laughter runs down the line. As each member comes up with his card, I hand him his envelope, he signs for it, and turns away with a "Merry Christmas, mister!" And I respond—fifteen hundred times. Often I have to laugh a thousand times, for the greater number of them try to make an occasion of their appearance at the table, and have carefully manufactured some facetious greeting, not always in perfect Kensington taste.

All this, of course, provided that the secretary has not bolted with the funds in November. That, unhappily, is an annual event, like grouse-shooting, over the sticks, and Epiphany, and is too piously observed. It begins—this migration of secretaries—in the first week of November and continues until the second week of December. During these weeks many secretaries of Diddlum Clubs, Farthing Clubs, and Slate Clubs, take to the road for a brief space before they are put into winter quarters. But when you consider the great number of these Clubs, and the foolish trust, without supervision, that is reposed in the secretaries, themselves penurious fellows, the defaulters are very few.

The largest Slate Club in the world is the New Tabernacle Provident Society, at the Leysian Mission, City Road. It adjoins the Alexandra Trust, where you can get three grand meals a

day for ten shillings a week. It pays out annually about £25,000, and hires a posse of police to escort the secretaries from the bank on paying-out day and to guard the cash table. But every little grocer's and butcher's and public-house in the side streets of the poorer quarters has its Christmas Club. About July, when editors are making up their Christmas Numbers and publishers are ready with their Autumn Lists, these little shops put up their first large-type announcements :

OUR XMAS CLUB HAS COMMENCED
PAY WHAT YOU LIKE —HAVE WHAT YOU LIKE

With the pubs, the Christmas bag is usually a goose, a bottle of whisky, bottle of port, and bottle of gin. With the butcher—turkey, goose, or joint of beef or pork ; and from the grocer you take what you will to the value of your card. The pub is usually the safest of these clubs : pubs seldom disappear overnight ; but you want to be careful in choosing your side-street grocer or " general " store, for in this line failures and abandoned shops are frequent.

The Slate Club at which I have assisted was a public-house club—the " Cuckoo's Nest " Slate Club, in the Cable Street district, kept by Mr. 'Ockington. You ought to know Mr. 'Ockington. He's a Lad. Times were, in the past, when he was Handy Hockington, a likely lad at a Canning Town boxing-ring ; and, later, Frederick Hockington, seaman, and, later still, Police-constable Hockington. To-day he is Mister Hockington, licensee of the " Cuckoo's

Nest." His bar deportment is exquisite—a mixture of the lamb and the lion. He can be lazily humorous, and he can blaze with rancour. He is not a big man, but behind his bar he looms. He is a Presence. He can crush an impatient customer with a glance; and no obstreperous fellow in the four-ale bar ever waits to be put out. Mister Hockington has only to lift an arm towards the counter-flap, and——

Only to familiars does he unbend, and even to them he is Mister Hockington. To the ordinary regular, he gives a "'Ow are yeh? And 'ow's the good lady?" To the stranger he gives nothing. But when he does talk . . . He has seen things, and he has done things, and his booming voice takes you round the world. He talks airily of days and nights in "B.A.", and fills his stuffy bar with the sharp sunshine of Buenos Aires, and the stinging odour of green seas. On occasions he will sing an old and improper chanty and turn from that to his days as dock policeman. He has a broad wit, and expresses it by hand-written notices on the walls of his bars.

> "A customer was taken from here to London Hospital last week. He spoke out of his turn."
>
> "Customers who get drunk in other houses and come here to finish are warned off."
>
> "Obscene language forbidden. The guv'nor can do it better than you."

His life has been a sequence of thwarted ambitions. As a youth the ring attracted him, and he saw himself with the light-weight championship and plenty of backers. A few k.o.'s put an end to that, and the sea called him. He saw himself with a master's ticket, and was moving slowly towards it when a mistake at the wheel in a Channel fog settled that. (If you want to spend a night in London Hospital ask Hockington how he came to lose the *Iris*.) His integrity, however, was always recognised, and a post in the dock police was found for him. And there he stayed, watching day by day ships, which he should have skippered, departing for sunlit harbours; until he was retired on a pension.

Then he spent some penitential years in the provincial wilderness in a suburb of Birmingham, where, so he told me, he "did very well in the second-hand." Those years, I gather, from his rare sidelong references, were years of bitter exile. Sorrow ate into his bonny frame, and withered his cheerio countenance, and the atmosphere of the provincial second-hand — which, indeed, must be the Avernus of the second-hand — corroded the bright metal of his soul.

It is to be noted that, while London is fed yearly with processions of young provincials, the provinces and the countryside are in equal measure fed with desperate adventurers from town; but—while the provincial in London remains always the provincial—the Cockney in the provinces quickly acquires the colour of his world, and becomes something unlovely. I

have met Cockneys at lone farmsteads in the Cotswolds, and did not know them from the thick-spoken and gun-footed shepherds until they acknowledged themselves in bitter words against the stark countryside. Most seaside landladies are Cockneys, even on the coast of North Wales; and Cockneys will serve you drinks in Manchester and Norwich, and will receive you at hotels in Torquay and Cheltenham and Ashby-de-la-Zouch. And always with tears in the voice; for the Cockney in the provinces mourns every day with those American lyrists whose sole theme is a desire to Go Back, to Go Back. I have never heard this accent of longing in the speech of the provincial in London. The rustic amid the nimble graces of the town never nurses a secret yearn for Rochdale or Chesterfield or Runcorn or the farm at Chorlton-cum-Hardy; not he. One of our public choristers put his finger well on it when he lately asked:

> How yeh gonna keep 'em down on the farm,
> After they've seen Paree?

He wants to be taken for a Cockney, and never succeeds; while the poor Cockney, against his will, assimilates provincial mannerisms until he is unrecognisable, though, throughout exile, his heart is in the Strand among the bananas. Sometimes he comes back, usually penniless; but more often he develops into "our worthy fellow-townsman," and is named in the local paper. Hockington was getting like that. He was beginning to be somebody in his ward; but, though there are many poor folk who would rather be Somebody among the little than

Nobody among the great, he was not one of them. And at last he came back, by no means penniless. "The second-hand" and his own prudence did him so well that he was able to retire to his own pavements and acquire the "Cuckoo's Nest."

And there he is now. His career of mishap has not soured him. He is chairman of that Slate Club, run at his house, and treasurer of the Christmas Goose Club. He has been a good husband and a kind father, and to him goes surely the encomium of the district—"'is word's as good as 'is bond." He takes a pride in his pub as in the ship that might have been his. He has no mercy for the slack worker, and his barman and barmaid speak of him as a 'oly terror. But they don't want to leave.

On Saturday nights he sits among his boys. He does not serve. That labour belongs to his wife and his staff. I once heard an impatient stranger ask him three times for a bitter. He rose. He leaned his bulk across the bar. He glared at the stranger; then asked, clipping his words: "Wodyeh take me for? A potman?" Towards his wife he is heavily facetious, and in conversation speaks of her as "that woman I live with"; and when her relatives arrive from the country, for a visit, he assembles them in the back parlour, and reads the Riot Act to them. She speaks of him as "that old fool," with a whimsical tolerance on the noun. The tolerance is justified. She knows him through and through, and, to his faults, of which he has many, she winks the other eye. She told

me so, and she told me a story about him ; told it proudly, too :

It appears that upon a night 'Ock went out to a dinner of some trade society, and he and a few personal friends, having done well at the dinner, decided to carry on the good work, and make a night of it. It appeared from his confession in the morning that they went here and went there, and in Oxford Street they picked up company, and drove to a "place" where women and bottles of wine were available.

Mrs. 'Ock sat up long past midnight, and at two o'clock retired to bed, leaving the door unbolted, uncomfortably sure that the old fool had got into a mess again. At four in the morning a hammering on the door. Mrs. 'Ock descended, and there on the doorstep sat a foot-sore 'Ock, half-asleep.

He didn't move.

"Come *upstairs*, silly great thing, you!"

"Shan't!"

"Don't be silly, Fred. You come upstairs with me at once."

Then 'Ock looked at his wife, and said the beautiful thing that endeared him to Mrs. 'Ock for all time.

"Nope. Nope, my gel. I'll—I'll stand y'all a bottler w-wine, but I'm d-damned if I'll come upstairs. I god doo good a missus!"

By his personality he has made the "Cuckoo's Nest" a Place. Men no longer call it by its sign. They say: "Let's go around to old 'Ockington's." He found it a battered little beer-shanty, unfrequented and of ill-repute. He has changed it into a place where men may take

their wives and hear nothing that should shock. His life may have been a record of failures, but it is crowned by this one achievement—the "Cuckoo's Nest" Go and see him one day, and try to make his acquaintance. I won't give you the precise address, but anybody around Leman Street and Cable Street will direct you if you ask for the house kept by "old 'Ockington."

In the Street called Queer

THE police-court is the living cinematograph of the town's life. There, in swift flashes, humanity passes before you in all its curious forms and phases. Comedy, melodrama, farce, tragedy and incredible coincidence follow one another as "case" follows "case." It is a procession of the passions, a panorama of the loves, hates, sorrows, cares, and freakish twists of man. Our neighbours may disguise themselves cleverly enough in their daily life; but once they are in the court the truth comes out. They stand revealed. We learn that our serious neighbour Mr. Brown, is a counterfeiter of pound-notes; that Mr. Robinson, of "The Laurels," is a Mormon; that Mr. Smith is addicted to secret drinking; that Mr. Wumble is a pathological case; that Mrs. Widley is a shop-lifter (we often wondered how she got those furs—and her husband only a surveyor); and that the venerable Mr. Steptoe is a "confidence" man. And it is surprising how the court shows them up. We wonder how we could ever have been deceived by them. All their criminal instincts come out and perch around them. Disguise is useless. There they stand, slinking like shop-lifters, or crouching like poisoners. Elegant clothes become shabby. Easy manners become ludicrous. Agreeable voices become hoarse and uneven.

Often they are not guilty of the offence, but it makes little difference ; one can never respect them again. In the dock or in the witness-box they have exposed their true selves ; all their assumed or native dignity gone ; and we, the spectators, are inclined to approve ourselves as not such poor creatures after all—until we begin to think how *we* should carry the situation in the dock or the box. Yet there is no sense of publicity ; it is more like an informal chat in chambers.

The procedure of one court is very much that of the others. First are heard, before the public is admitted, the applicants for advice and summonses. Then, the plain drunks. Then, the drunk-and-disorderlies and assaults on the police. Then, the motorist and cyclist offenders. Then, the more serious cases. In the court are the magistrate, the clerk, the usher (who usually combines this office with that of caretaker), one or two policemen to keep order, solicitors representing the offenders, the usual pressmen and the court missionary. At the back or the sides, behind a railing, the public stands.

The most interesting figure of all is that of the court missionary ; usually a man, but sometimes a woman, and in big courts a man and a woman. He is a sort of liaison officer between the offender and the law. His duties are manifold, and his hours are the hours of the clock. You read the phrase : " the court missionary was asked to make enquiries." It sounds simple, but those enquiries may mean a day's work, and, to make them effectively, the mis-

sionary must have knowledge and understanding of men of all types, fearlessness, a kind heart, a strong mind, a quick judgment, and — most important—tact and an unofficial manner. For in his human manner, as against the policeman's authority, lies the value of his office. By his experience he is usually apt in detecting the sniveller, the hypocrite, and the rogue; and in spotting innocence where all the evidence points to guilt. He touches every angle of human nature. He has to patch-up husband and wife quarrels, to placate landlord and lodger, to get work for the first offender who has been "driven to it" by unemployment, to admonish naughty boys and girls, to keep in touch with offenders released on probation, to take charge of attempted suicides, to reclaim the old offender, to talk with prisoners on remand and seek to help them; and generally to be father, guardian, pastor, teacher, uncle and good friend to the helpless and broken creatures of the highways and hedges.

It is, I am sure, no reflection on the court missionaries of to-day to say that the best of them was that rare character, Thomas Holmes, once missionary to the North London Court at Dalston, and later secretary to the Howard Society. He wrote three volumes of his experiences of the people among whom and for whom he worked; and, if you would learn charity towards all men and malice towards none, get them and read them and read them again. He not only did his work efficiently; he had a great gift of winning the friendship of even the "old hands" in crime; and, though

many of them treated his efforts towards reclaiming them with a certain jocular scorn, they recognised his quality and always came to see him when they "came out." They knew him for a straight man and fearless; and though they visited his home, and sometimes lodged with him, nothing of his was ever touched. They might have robbed a magistrate, but Mister 'Olmes was on a different footing. By tacit agreement he was exempt from professional attentions. I have myself observed this trait in old "lags." Treat them as man to man, and they and their friends will never worry you. But show the least sign of regarding them as offenders, or patronising them, and you are not safe. If they ask you for money, and give you their word to repay it by Monday, and you take their word casually, as you would take a friend's word, you will get your money. But if you take their word with even a suggestion of manner that they need not bother to give it, because you don't expect them to keep it, you will lose your money; and you will damage their self-respect.

For most of the respectable poor the police-court, in prospect, holds many terrors, but in the metropolitan courts these terrors have no real existence. The J.P. of the country town is pretty much as he was when Smollett portrayed him as Justice Gobble in "Lancelot Greaves" but I have always found the London magistrates wise, understanding, humane, and courteous—except to the "twister." They are anxious to help, rather than harass; kindly rather than cynical; though Lord knows the

job would turn most sweet believers into cynics. Even when sentencing the old offender there is a sort of twinkling cameraderie between the bench and the "lag"—a wry smile upon human frailty and a saucy deference to the operations of the law.

"Well, Bennett, this is the eighth time this year. Anything to say?"

Bennett, a stocky, grizzled figure, past middle age, leans confidently across the rail of the dock, and talks as man to man.

"No, sir. It was a fair cop. I on'y come out a munf ago—that is, a munf ago come Pancake Day. But there, you know 'ow it is, doncher? Fact is, I'm too full o' life to be let loose. When I'm on me own, I 'ave to break out now and then—or suffocate. But I'm alwis well be'aved in there. They'll tell yeh so—won't yeh, sergeant? I'm 'appier in there. More 'omey-like. But once I'm out—well, *you* know what boys are. . . . Go on, Mister Cairns, get on wiv it."

"Very well, then . . . Two months."

"'Ard?"

"Without hard labour."

"Thank yeh, Mister Cairns. That's real matey. O revvaw!"

Then there is the indignant reprobate.

"Here again, Gassler. You're always here. And always the same charge. . . . Well, did you cut the prosecutor's eye?"

"Well, Mister Reynolds, 'e called me a bahstud."

"Oh?"

"Yerce. Who's gointer sit dahn under that?

Woddud *you* do, Mister Reynolds, if I was to call *you* a bahstud ? "

" I think we'll leave speculative questions out of it, and stick to facts. Now, you, sir, did you call prisoner a bastard ? "

" Well—yes, sir, I did."

" And why ? "

" Well, 'e come storming into the bar, upset my beer and pinched my wife's cheek. And as 'e's alwis doing things like that I lorst me temper and called 'im—what you said. And then 'e set abaht me and give me this."

" I see. You hear that, Gassler ? Did you upset this man's beer and interfere with his wife ? "

" Well, I was alwis one for a bit of a lark. *You* know that, sir."

" Yes. I seem to recollect some of your larks. But I'm afraid such high spirits must be curbed. They are not good for you or your neighbours. What did I give you last time ? "

" Fourteen days, sir, and it seems to me cruel 'ard that——"

" Right. Take six weeks this time."

" Six weeks ? 'Ere, I say, guv'nor. . . . An' after 'im calling me a bahstud ? "

" Take the prisoner down."

" All right, all right. Don't git excited. I'm going. But I on'y 'ope someone calls *you* a bahstud 'fore long. Then you'll 'ave sympathy with a man's feelings. We got our feelings same as what you 'ave, an . . . 'm . . . 'm."

And there is the bewildered first offender, who knows that the magistrate has some title of

honour, but does not know the term, and addresses him variously as "My Lord," "Your Grace," "Your Worship," "Your Honour," "Judge" and "My Worship."

Each court has its own atmosphere. Marlborough Street and Marylebone share the West End offenders. Bow Street and Mansion House are often sensational with "big" cases—fraud and murder. North London has its pitiful tale of squalor and wreckage. West Ham has its riots, assaults, and domestic squabbles; and Thames, the chief court for dockland, is the richest of them all in the bizarre and the unexpected. In the past, Marlborough Street and Marylebone were centres of interest; for then there was a daily procession of offenders, rich and poor, shabby and resplendent. Then there were drunks in last night's evening clothes, gaming-house charges, disorderly house raids, silken ladies and drabs charged with obstructing, street affrays, assaults and battery, and all that aftermath of London-by-night when London was supposed to be as "gay" as Paris.

To-day, these are the dullest of courts. "Drunk" charges are few, and solicitation charges against women are not made now. Our streets are cleansed, and the girls that once sauntered in the open places and highways now either loiter in dim side-streets or have sought fresh territory in the commons of the suburbs. The old type has passed away, and a new type has arisen—the amateur. I do not know that this is for the better. The professionals who sat night by night in the basement bars around Leicester Square were old, haggard, bold and

harsh. Their physical appeal to young men could have been small. But these new amateurs are more attractive ; they are pretty, youthful, graceful and naturally lively. You see them about in all parts after the big shops are closed. It is not with them a matter of the last resort of all for mere bread. They are in it because they like it ; they want an evening out. If they can get it without paying for it, they will ; but they are ready to give the usual return when it is expected.

This class was always about, but it is now a growing class. It came in during the war, when the professionals were put down, and when the second-lieutenant could have all that he asked of England's girlhood. It began in khaki-mania, but it is now for many a settled course of life. You will find this type around the bus-stops and in the tea-lounges of the cheap-rich hotels. She bears no distinguishing marks. She is mostly at the flapper stage—in her 'teens, often of good middle class and of fair education. There is no flashy costume, not much paint, and no coarse behaviour. She has not the frank inviting grin of her elder sister, or the verbal appeal ; but there is a delicate twist on the lips and a certain veiled audacity in the eye. I once asked one of these bluntly what attracted her in playing at what was a serious and unpleasant business. I wondered whether it were easy money or pure animalism. Neither, she said. Things were dull at home, and she liked the fun and excitement of meeting and talking to different people. That was all. She talked with graceful accent, and showed sense and

sensibility and considerable intelligence, with a perverse delight in her new course of life. It spelt Adventure.

She and her kind are wary. Never do they get into the police-court. They make no approaches. Their demeanour is faultless. They do not parade and invite. They wait for that to come from the other side, and should there be any suspicion of trouble they immediately swing round in disgust and charge the man with interfering with them. That is why the West End courts are free of solicitation charges ; and why makers of statistics complacently point to the purging of social life. In the same way they point to the absence of " drunk " charges, as the result of the shortened hours. In each case, it only means that the old games are going on downstairs instead of on the ground floor. Letting the devil pop out now and then may not be perfect policy, but to imprison him in the heart is folly. Vice has become respectable and discreet ; and never is vice so abominable as when it is discreet and latent.

The East End has not yet learnt these tricks, and there they go about their naughtiness with clumsy candour, in open light. Daily the Thames Police Court provides a pageant of curious misdemeanour ; a succession of glimpses into dark corners of the heart. It stands in Arbour Square, Stepney—a horrid travesty of the squares of Mayfair. The court is a low squat building of unkind countenance. You pass through the public entry, and take your place at the back with a company of unemployed, niggers, brown men, Chinks, wasters, blowsy

women in variegated costumes ; some of them idle lookers-on, others friends or enemies of the accused. The cinema and the music-hall cost money. This show is free to all, with the added glow of grace that goes with the contemplation of the misfortunes of your neighbours. All police-courts have a smell—the smell of poverty ; but Thames has a rich and varied succession of smells ; the smells peculiar to the Chink, the Malay, the Russian and the Burmese. And this cluster of vague smells gathers, like a swarm of bees, about the smell of poverty, and becomes one definite potent stink. But this offence to the nose, virulent though it be, is countered by the drama that is unfolded as each case is called.

Monday is a good day. The first appearances are the Saturday-night cases, and these are of every type—the tough, the pugilist, the respectable workman fallen from grace, a shopkeeper, a few old women, and an occasional black man. The rarest charge is a drunken Chink. He offends often, but never in drunkenness. Rare and subtle offences, imported from the East, and left unrecorded by most newspapers, follow squabble between landlord and tenant, husband and wife, and mother and daughter. Quong Foo is charged with being in possession of opium and smoking utensils. He speaks no English, and the Chinese interpreter is called in. Quong Foo has nothing to say. He listens to the charge and blinks. The police ask for a deportation order. They produce evidence that he has been previously convicted of keeping a gaming-house, and has been harbouring white girls. Here Quong Foo speaks, and the interpreter

tells the court that Quong didn't want the girls: they came to him and refused to go away. Fined £10, and recommended for deportation. Quong pays up and goes quietly away.

Jack Ramshu Boona, Malay, charged with stabbing a compatriot. Boona has much to say—too much—and says it at some length. Another interpreter called. Boona admits the stabbing, but shows weighty cause why he did the right thing. The stabbing was quite in order and according to rules. It began in Upper Burmah, and he has waited three years for this occasion. Magistrate unconvinced. Twenty-one days.

Mrs. O'Flaherty wants assistance to find her daughter, aged 15. She hasn't been home for three nights. Has lately been going with black men, and four days ago two white boys set about her in the street because of this. Press asked to publish description. Court Missionary asked to confer with Mrs. O'Flaherty.

George Gattring, stevedore, charged with assaulting gate-keeper at docks. Gate-keeper appears, a bundle of splints and bandages. Gattring was one of two hundred men applying for four jobs. When jobs were filled Gattring assaulted gate-keeper. Gattring, ex-soldier with four children and pension of seventeen-and-sixpence a week, admits assault. Had walked from Upper Tooting for this job. When job was filled, gatekeeper became abusive and "made a face at me, and got my blood up. Wouldn't it you, with four kids what've only had stale bread and water the last week?" Court Missionary has enquired at Gattring's

home, and found his story correct. Magistrate very sympathetic, but assault proved. Seven days. Missionary asked to render assistance at home.

George Washington Grant Lincoln Jones, coloured gentleman, charged with shooting at landlord of "Formosa Lily," and with being in possession of a revolver without a licence. G.W.G.L. Jones denies everything. Landlord tells of refusing Jones a drink after closing time, whereupon Jones fired at him. The bullet smashed four bottles of whisky and three glasses. Remanded. Jones leaves the dock, indignantly denying the story, and immediately uppercuts the landlord. Turmoil and struggle. Jones collared and taken below, to be charged again later with this fresh assault.

Iris May Hamburg, charged with wandering without means. Has been living in Amoy Place. Mother, from Salisbury, of well-to-do middle-class, begs Iris to go home with her. Iris refuses. Fed up. Magistrate pleads with her. Still refuses. She is much happier on her own. Sent to a reformatory. Scene. A wail of horror. Outburst in the dock. Matron called in. Struggle, till at last physical force wins. Iris disappears through doorway, a whirlwind of screams and limbs and clothes. Screams ringing through court long after she has disappeared. Everybody uncomfortable. Convulsive moans heard coming from the cells.

And the next case is called, and the next. And above the clamour of charge and counter-charge, of solid asseveration and vehement

denial, sits, calm and cool, the magistrate, the Cadi of this corner of the East. His face is impassive. You might think that his attention was wandering; that he saw and heard nothing. But you find, at the end of the case, that he has heard and seen everything that passed, and much that was imperceptible to those untrained in the wile and cunning of the old offender. In one case you may think him too harsh, in another too lenient. But he knows. He knows how to weigh the motive against the act; how to discern the truth or the lie, whether it come from Oriental lips or Cockney jaws. He does not, like a judge, sit to administer pure law, but to guide, to counsel, to befriend, and, sorrowfully, to punish.

Punishments vary in the magistrate's discretion. There are some who are noted for the extreme sentence that the law permits; others, who seldom use their full power. The main idea is that the punishment should fit the crime, but surely this is wrong. The aim of punishment is to deter, and therefore the punishment should fit the criminal, not the crime. Instead of a set code of punishments for set offences, we should have a code variable upon the character of the prisoner. Many men will continue cheerfully to offend, so long as their offences may be met by money-payments, while seven days' imprisonment would mean hell for them. Others would more comfortably do a month than pay up forty shillings. Some tough cases, sentenced to a long term, have even asked that some of it may be docked, and the "cat"

substituted instead; what would be physical torture to others is to them a trifle. The character and temperament of the prisoner should in all cases be considered before passing sentence, so that he may receive the sentence that will most impress him. A month's imprisonment for an old hand and a month's imprisonment for a quiet suburban clerk may sound the same thing, but they are widely different. For precisely similar offences, one man might be adequately punished by the public exposure, the night in the cells, and the ride in the prison-van; while the other would be only properly punished by six months' hard labour. For numbers of hard-shelled men prison will have no horrors; for the more sensitive seven days at Wandsworth is as affrighting as a stretch at Portland.

When the lighter cases are dismissed, the more serious cases, remand cases, come on. It is instructive to hear a detective give evidence. In flat, grey tones he recites what the prisoner said on being arrested. One can visualise the scene—the shock, the fright, the hoarse tones, the exclamatory appeals, the whine, the outburst. But nothing of this atmosphere is reproduced by the detective. Keeping his eyes on his notes, he intones from them without the slightest inflection to mark one word from another, so that the prisoner shall not be in any way prejudiced by any stress or lighting-up of possibly damaging words.

"I told the prisoner that I held a warrant for her arrest, and that she would be charged with

the manslaughter of Annie Diprose, and I duly cautioned her that anything she might say would be taken down."

"Did the prisoner make any remarks?"

"Yes. (Reading from notes). She said: "O-my-God-that-Sal-has-put-me-away-she-is-a nice-one-what-shall-I-do-I-will-never-help-any-body-in-trouble-again."

. . . . . .

It was at Thames that I got mixed up in the case of Ernie, through his creating a disturbance in the public section, and calling me his dear ole pal. We were both turned out. I had never met him before, but I met him often after that. Ernie has a story—a pale, commonplace story; neither tragic nor comic; just a dull descent into the mire, until he became a regular figure in the court list. I have gathered his story from him, at odd occasions, piecemeal. Here it is:

He was a young man, and his father, a retired captain, though able on the sea, was a fool of a father. Ernie was to go into business, and, while father looked about for a business, Ernie, lazy, weak, and shiftless, employed his allowance in becoming one of the lads. The other lads would drink or not drink, as business required; but Ernie was a dipsomaniac, on the mat when they opened, and thrown out at closing-time. He abused the gift of good drink as others abuse the gift of good food or the holy gift of sex. He frittered his hours away in banal chatter with tough loafers and in swift rounds. He, who could not drink, judged men by their capacity in drinking; and he looked with

contempt upon those who refused another when he himself was loose on his legs. "You're no good, y'know. *Yew* carn' drink."

He was discovered by an ex-bruiser, who introduced him to the bunch. Until then he had been a lonely youth, wandering aimlessly about the streets, and allaying his boredom by afternoon and nightly visits to music-halls, theatres, and cinemas. Then Slaughter Levinsky found him, and found the fat pocket and the pale amiability. Ernie was delighted with the company to whom the pug introduced him. He moved upward into a world of wit and warmth and wonder. He had not known that there were such good fellows about Stepney. They were good boys—oh, fine boys. Real sports. After he had been an hour in their company, they told him that he was a good boy, too. There was a "something" about him, they said. . . . And they asked him what he was having, with gestures expressive of making him a present of the complete pub.

By two o'clock they were still there; and now they were like old friends. He was "Ernie," and they were "George" and "Fred" and "Charlie." It seemed that George had been waiting for years to meet just such a one as Ernie, worthy of his darling confidences. As he laconically put it, after a shut-eyed rambling quest for the exact phrase: They under*stood* one another. That's what it was. And Ernie agreed. At six o'clock in the evening they met again, amid a spattering hail of—"What y'aving, ole man? No—I arst 'im first."

They left uproariously at half-past ten, bubbling with stories and intimacies.

Early next morning, Ernie met Charlie in the Mile End Road. Charlie passed him with barely a nod. Ernie wondered whether he had given offence ; or whether Charlie had forgotten their long evening's friendship, and did not know, " outside," the friends of the saloon. It didn't seem right, somehow. Charlie had barely looked at him. His face had been downcast ; a little knot had formed on his brow, and the half-smile he attempted seemed to hurt him. But at twelve o'clock, when Ernie called at the rendezvous, Charlie was there, genial and open ; a little lower in tone, perhaps, but ready with hand at pocket. " Morning, Ernie. 'Ow're yeh feeling ? Bit of a doing last night, eh ? What's it to be ? . . . Well, 'ere's good music, boy ! "

He was one of them. He heard their adventures, shared their troubles and applauded their exploits. " 'Course, Ernie, this won't go no farther, y'know. . . ." " Oh, 'at's all right, o' man. *I* know. I'm a bo'emian, and a pal's a pal, whether 'e goes orf the rails or not."

And, while father went about looking for suitable businesses to purchase, Ernie cultivated the tricks of good fellowship.

And so it went on, with two " sittings " a day; and, although the old man proffered various businesses, none of them caught Ernie's fancy. Business was to him the dullest of penances. He was sure he wasn't cut out for business. The boys confirmed his feeling about this. Business

was all very well for some people, but fine, choice spirits, creatures of the air, were never meant for hacking.

Then came a night when Slaughter Levinsky must celebrate a scoop.

It was a Night.

By nine o'clock Ernie had passed his own limit of one over the eight, but he chuckled at his old caution. He could go on for ever like this. Good Sports. His words came with difficulty, and he had to move his lips with deliberation. Things tightened up, and objects stood out in shocking profile. Charlie's face, now he came to look at it, was one of the handsomest he'd ever seen. Like a statue's. And what a figure he had. And how he could hold it. Always his glass was empty, and always he was crying—"Now come on, boys! With me!"

After four more, a change took place in the nature of things. The corners of the room bulged and shifted. The room kept no shape for long. The ceiling spun. The floor rocked. Nausea hovered about him. Silly tunes sang in his head. Things grew to monstrous heights yet seemed to be fading away. Bar seemed to be bigger than usual. Everybody seemed to be a long way from him, and the bar had moved. When he stretched his arm to put his glass down he couldn't reach it, and the glass smashed.

Charlie lolloped against the bar. Levinsky stood swaying, feet wide apart. George stood bent at a perilous angle, grinning amiably at the world. They stood in the centre of a violet cloud.

He got up from the lounge, and swayed towards them, opening the circle with a lurch. There were strident protests of "'Ere I say!" and cackles of laughter. He ignored them and fixed Levinsky.

"Levinsky—'swun thing I've alwis wonnid say chew. Levinsky—you're dam sonofabitch. 'Ad's what yew are. See? Jus' thought I'd tell yer. See? 'M, 'M." He swayed. Levinsky swayed with him. Then he linked his arm in Ernie's.

"Ah, there y'are, Ernie. 'Squite ri' what chew said. I am. And proud *of* it. 'Ere me and you understand one another. You an' me'll sit together. 'Ave quiet li'l drink. Leave these ignorant swine."

He pushed Ernie to the lounge, and they had doubles. The electric lights of the bar, which had once been poppy-points, were now great blazing suns. They went reeling through chaos. The nausea passed, and Ernie moved into the next stage of well-being. He began to recognise now that he wasn't himself, but he was quite content. He was somebody much better. A new man, in fact. The evening was only just beginning.

He had two more with Levinsky. . . .

Then his peace was suddenly disturbed. Men were round him, standing over him. He was on the floor. They were pulling him up.

"Wassamatter—eh? Siddown all of yeh. Siddown. Lessavanother. 'Smy turn."

"'Ere—who's going to see this dam fool 'ome. Who knows where 'e lives?"

" 'At's all right. *I* know. Me and George'll take 'im."

They gathered round and lifted him up, and though he fought them, and protested against home, George and Charlie carried him out. Between them, they bandy-chaired him home to his father, who was sitting up for him. His father took him in and carried him upstairs.

Next morning there was a scene. The old man began to perceive his ways and their probable end, and the argument ended in a spasm of severity. Cash allowance was cut off from that day. Without cash, thought the old man, he must surely come to heel.

But he didn't. He was too deep in "the life" to climb out at a warning cry.

Without money he was at a loss, but work held no bright invitation. He stood outside saloons, before and during opening hours, pondering and torturing himself to think up means of getting money and tasting again the convivial life. But for weeks he could think of nothing. Between meal-times he mooned miserably about the streets, smoking the cheap cigarettes bought with the sixpence a day that his father allowed him. Soon he came to accept a drink from anybody who offered it. And when a lad does that . . .

But then an idea came to him—slowly and quietly as such ideas come. An idea with money in it. After a few days of make-believe hesitation he paid a visit to a police-station in the district. He came away with money.

"And look here," said the inspector. He

passed a hand across his mouth, as one wiping away an offensive taste. He was a man of probity who preferred to do his work by the rules of the game and disliked the sometimes necessary safety-play. "Now the business is done let me tell you that you're the smelliest little skunk I ever met."

"'Ere—what?"

"What I said. I want those boys bad. They're wrong 'uns all of 'em. But they've got a Bottom Line. There's one thing none of 'em's ever done yet. None of 'em's sold a pal. Yew—yew ain't a wrong 'un. Yew ain't got the pluck for that. You're a skunk—that's what yew are."

"No, but . . ."

"None o' your back answers. Else I'll . . . Good-night, Judas."

Ernie left that station with a creeping skin. Next day, as he went about the streets, various acquaintances passed him or overtook him. Those who were alone looked the other way. Those in couples looked at one another, and words passed between them that twisted their lips. His money made him free of the bars, and he made for one. In a corner stood two or three men whom he knew. He took his glass and went to them. In a concerted movement each man of that group drank up and went out. Ernie's legs went to water, and his face hurt him. All that day and night he drank and drank and drank. In a drunken sleep that followed he had a dream. . . .

In the morning he went back to Inspector

Territon, sick and remorseful, and offered him the remains of the money. And Territon brushed him aside, and told him to go and hang himself.

That was the end of Ernie. When I last saw him, stale-drunk in a Bethnal Green bar, he was telling a bewildered stranger a rambling story of how, two thousand years ago, he had betrayed a man in a garden to his enemies.

In the Streets of the Far East

It was in the bar of the "Town of Ramsgate," by Wapping Old Stairs, that Monk and I met the man from the Port of London Authority. It was a fruitful meeting. It turned our sauntering afternoon into hot hours of experience. For, by the agency of our friend, we toured all the treasure-houses of the London Docks, and finished in the wine-vaults, where hours of opening are not considered; and that visit to the wine-vaults sent us to Canning Town and me to an adventure.

True to the Cockney's habit of ignoring the show-places of London, I had never seen the inside of the London Docks, though I had known the streets about its walls from childhood. It is a little town by itself. Every commodity that is brought into England has its warehouse here, and every job that men can do has its "shop" here. There are the carpenter's shop, the turner's shop, the wheelwright's shop, the blacksmith's shop, the chain-maker's shop. There are the dried-fruit warehouse, the pulse and bean warehouse, the tea warehouse, the sugar warehouse, the grain warehouse, the wool warehouse, the spice warehouse, the ivory and hides warehouse, the drug warehouse, the tobacco

warehouse, and the chilled meat warehouse. It is the stomach of London.

You may walk through groves of haricot and soya beans, through lanes of currants, over fields of tea and sugar, and amid forests of tobacco and undergrowths of wool. Here are clusters of ivory, wrought and in the tusk; tables laden with rare spices; chunks of coral and buckets of quicksilver. You may punch bales of greasy wool. You may tread on half-inch layers of sugar. You may crush thousands of currants underfoot and walk almost ankle-deep in haricots. Currants and haricots are good food, and are not too cheap, but at the docks, when a bag has burst and scattered its contents, the correct thing is to tread them into the floor. Any dockman scraping up a handful of dusty currants, to take home for a pudding for the kids, would find himself at Thames Police Court. They call it theft. So we did as we were told, and trod them in, and I made an effort at calculating how many tons of good food were thus wasted every month.

From the sequestered quiet of the store-houses, and their challenging odours, we were hurried to the carpenter's shop. Its smell was dry and drab; it rang with demoniac noise and energy. A dozen saws, big and little, hand and machine, were going at top speed. Lathes were humming. Belts were whizzing. Thence we wandered to Pier Head, for the breeze, dazed with plenitude and the sight of too much of everything.

London Docks are London in little and trade in

big. It is the pantry of Brobdingnag, and the small human eye can receive no clear impression of its business; only a blurred sensation of mountainous movement and tremendous bulk. The spirit of the immediate present is its guide. It is not working for posterity; it has no truck with the dry bones of the past. It lives and labours for this week, and all its magnificent machinery moves for the purpose of now. It is a museum of the passing things of to-day.

But then we came to the wine-vaults and found peace. It was like a Chopin nocturne after a railway accident. There is no riot or clamour in the wine-vaults; all is subdued. The vaults are a sort of school, and here lie thousands of wines, quietly growing up and growing in grace.

At the top of a small flight of stone steps, our friend handed us over to George, and with George we passed from strong sunlight into dark arches. What light there was came from small electric bulbs embedded in the roofs, and a sweet cool smell arose from the earth at our feet. On a small counter by the door were ranged a number of torches—flat arms of wood with little spirit-lamps at the end, in shape something like an opium pipe. They are fashioned in this way so that you may hold them to light your feet, for the long corridors of the vaults are lined with raised rails for the easier trundling of the barrels, and as the floor is densely spread with tan these rails are sometimes obscured. Each of us was given a torch, and when I came to inspect mine I found that it was similar in

every point to those in use at these very vaults a hundred years ago. You will see them depicted in an old colour-print by Robert Cruikshank of the London Dock Vaults.

From the entrance-door, corridors run in every direction, miles of them, each fully lined with barrels of the noblest sort ; and you may stand there and look down vistas of Oporto, of Jamaica, of Burgundy, of Champagne, of Xeres, of Moselle, of Holland, of Lombardy, of Tokay, of Canary, of the glens of Scotland and the valleys of the Rhine and the chateaux of the Gironde. The heart first leaps at the prospect; then fails. It is too much of a good thing. But when George led us in solemn file down the corridor, and into a dim alcove, and there got busy with a mallet, and then held up against the pinched blue flame of his lamp a glass of living ruby that glowed through the darkness—then, we did respond. That was a moment worth holding, and George had a sense of its value. He did not move, but stood bowed under the lowering roof of that cool recess, holding the glass before us, who, in our turn, stood silent. Our torches drooped to our feet. No light came from them above the curve of the barrel, but in the gloom that wine shone and gave off light. With proper gesture George handed the glass to Monk, and filled two others. We drank. The wine was of the cool, suave, cathedral quality of the place : a wine to be drunk in silence ; a wine that did not sing, but chanted ; a wine of purity and elegance, of gaiety and wisdom. We drank it in full re-

cognition of its quality, and then talked of it in murmurs, until George led us on down the corridors.

After many turns his mood changed. Down here he had a vermouth. Not merely a vermouth, but a VERMOUTH. Aha! No solemnity about that. Never, he said, was there such vermouth in such condition as this vermouth. We must taste it. We made ourselves agreeable, and certainly the vermouth was unlike any other that I had tasted. Nor have I ever found any like it outside those vaults. To whom they belonged, whose barrels we were breaking into, I do not know; but, if ever I find out, I will make amends for my share in the ullage by ordering a dozen. George led us farther. He had an Amontillado down there. Clearly he was proud of that Amontillado.

We followed him.

Our firefly torches fluttered at our feet. Now and then a rat scampered, leaving a filigree trail in the tan.

I know not how many miles we walked. George's instructions were to follow him, and we followed him, resting only at his bidding. The spirit of the place wrought upon me—the darkness and the damp and the silence. The barrels were so many monsters, lurking in corners to spring upon us. I felt that we should never get out, but go on for ever, wandering round and round hundreds of miles of narrow passage, following George. I wished I hadn't had that vermouth. Or perhaps it was the sherry. An hour passed, and we were still following George.

Monk was agreeable to following him all night. I think I was lagging, for George called to me.

"Come on, mister. You're all right. Keep behind me. Never mind the rats; they won't fly at yeh. You're all right. You ought to see the business I've 'ad with some people. Cuh! I could write a book about what I've seen down here. . . . Follow me."

We followed him. . . .

Next thing I remember is surrendering my torch at the door, and climbing up the steps into a burst of sharp sunlight, which momentarily dazzled me. Monk, too, was dazzled by it, and was walking softly towards the wall . . . following George . . . until he discovered that George was no longer with us. Whereupon we pulled ourselves together, and got out into Pennington Street, and so to Commercial Road. There we agreed to take a bus ride to Canning Town, on pretence of looking up old friends, but really to clear our heads.

. . . . . .

I do not know that the most exquisite wine that the country holds is a fitting prelude to the gritty irritations of Canning Town, or that Canning Town is an apt pendant to the wine. But days seldom permit themselves to be governed by an arbitrary æsthetic. To Canning Town we went, and perhaps the very incongruity of it mated not disagreeably with the early adventure. Certainly the harum-scarum 'bus-ride over the pot-holes and jutting tram-lines of Commercial Road cleared our heads, and by the time we

reached the Iron Bridge we were ready for anything.

Canning Town is good East End. Its pulse and temper are deep and wayward. It drums barbarically to the rhythms of Alsatia. Here is a bit of the old untamed London : a whiff of Tudor Bankside ; and though, like all East End parishes, it has its Missions and its Settlements, it hasn't yet surrendered to them. Respectability has pricked it, but hasn't wholly blasted it. It is to-day what the nearer East was fifty years ago. Here are big-bodied, foot-fisted men and Roaring Girls. The men are slow, elephantine. The girls, lusty and comely after their rude fashion, are full of the headlong neck-and-neck spirit of the streets ; and even the flirtatious females of thirteen walk like colts. Here are the "Imperial," and its adjoining cinema, which, only a year or so ago, was the last of the tavern music-halls. And here is the serpentine Iron Bridge, and the vast disordered plain of water and yards and roofs and chimneys that it bestrides.

It knows crashing days and vast midnights. Giant Industry has this territory in thrall, and his footfalls are keenly heard and his footmarks sharply seen. From the Bridge you look across a grotesque allotment of toil, breathing and smoking and rumbling, and upon waste patches where the monster has passed and left only wounds. It is a wilderness shot with glowering colour and ringing with the voices of the pilgrims of the night. Around you lie the workyards and the water ; beyond, blue mysteries strung with

scarves of raw light and knots of shadow. It is one of the widest prospects of East London.

We made a visit to the Imperial for the sake of old times, and then wandered down Victoria Dock Road, and through its by-ways. There are queer houses in these by-ways, and queer shops. They hark back. They sell foods that have long ceased to be popular in other parts. They sell those shocking musical instruments—the accordion, the melodion, the ocarina and the jew's harp—now supplanted, in all well-conducted homes, by the gramophone. You will find, too, second-hand batches of the old penny dreadfuls, these also supplanted by the less dreadful and perhaps less subversive publications of the big syndicates. You will find here the old Edwin Brett journals, and ghastly periodicals from obscure presses. I acquired a bob's worth of these, and good ding-dong reading they make for midwinter evenings by the chimney corner. The very titles give a prickle to the skin—"The Black Monk's Curse" "The Boy Bandit," "Blueskin," "The Vampire's Bride," "The Wild Boys of London," "The Skeleton Crew," "Tyburn Dick," "Starlight Nell," "The Moonlight Riders," "The Pretty Girls of London."

Rough stuff, and not, I think, altogether suitable reading for the young; yet it seems that in course of its refinement the "dreadful" of to-day has lost zest. It is clean, wholesome stuff, written with some care; yet the essential ingredient of hot-footed devilry is missing. The heroes are tepid and morally punctilious. They stand for law and order, and defeat the

cunning and the lawless with manly virtues, where the older heroes were against the law and the villains were of Bow Street. Deplorable ethics, I know, but what's a penny dreadful if it isn't dreadful? Heroes should have no business with scruples; they should be rebels always.

The old defunct feast of St. Valentine is also honoured, in a twisted way, in these little shops; and during the month of February their windows are made hideous by high-coloured representations of women with asses' heads or padlocked lips and other deformities. With these atrocious missives the youth of the district work off old scores against unfriendly associates. They are stabs in the back; delivered to the poor victim with the evil glee of the anonymous-letter maniac. There are pictures of squinting eyes, of club feet, of hare lips, each with its malicious verse; and pictures of babies, with verse suggesting that father would do well to look into its true parentage. One of these shot into a family circle, or sent to a sensitive girl, may easily poison mutual trust, or lead to extreme action. Nowhere else in London, I believe, does the custom persist; and I hope that even the strong stomach of Canning Town will soon turn against it.

At eight o'clock I picked up Fred, at Tidal Basin, and through him got into trouble. He said there were to be some doings at Bow, if we cared to come along. We did care, and strolled with him up Brunswick Road. In a skittle-alley at Bow we rested and made a note or two, and sat watching him collect the

doings. Fred is by profession a journeyman tailor, but he has far too much spirit for one ordinary man ; I could not face a night out with nine of him. When he isn't tailoring he plays skittles, horses, billiards, and other little games, and sometimes does a bit of snide-pitching. He's a twister ; yet in some of his twists and turns he discloses a companionableness that immediately attracts. There's no nonsense about Fred. He puts up no defence. Unlike our company promoters, he knows that stealing is wrong and he knows that he is not as good as other men. He'll tell you with engaging candour how he did somebody down the other day, and half an hour later he will do you down in exactly the same way, and then call you a fool.

" Well, wodyeh grumblin' abaet ? I warned yeh, di'n I ? Yeh can't saey I di'n warn yeh. Fair do's now . . . I *warned* yeh."

If Fred were to put the gusto and persistence into his work that he puts into his play, there would be a great outcry in the tailors' union. But Fred only works when " things " are bad. He goes everywhere. He is to be seen at Alexandra Park, at Hurst Park, at Kempton Park, at football matches, at billiards-rooms in remote suburbs, at bowling-greens, at whist tournaments, and at Brighton on Sundays. Wherever the doings may be, you bet Fred is there to snaffle his share of them. When Fred and I first knew one another, we were much of a kind ; and, as I remember the old Fred, so I find little in him that offends. He was then the

usual London lad—alert, audacious, plucky, and, if with knowledge of guile, himself guileless. He has gone far since then. He has branched out. His audacity could not let him rest on the tailor's board. So he fought circumstance with pluck and cunning, and now carries himself with an air ; an ignoble air, certainly, but not craven or shifty. He knows he is a Bad Man, as other men know that they are clerks or bus-conductors ; and that is all there is to it. His spry figure, his brilliant eyes, and his steady good-humour make him friends even among his victims. He is Old Fred . . . with a shrug and a nod . . . a very Lad of a twister.

After he had played several games, he said he would show us what a good time was like. He kept his promise. He kept it so well that at midnight, round about Old Ford, I lost Monk and Fred lost me. As it seemed useless to attempt a search, and as my shouts received no answer, I stayed where I was—near a bus terminus—and finished a queer day with a queer encounter.

I hung about the deserted terminus some long minutes, without any sign of traffic or Company's men, and was debating whether I should foot it home, and chance finding a taxi on the other side of St. Paul's, when a figure slouched from a side street and hung about at the corner. It was a lank figure in a disreputable mackintosh and a cap pulled well forward. After some shuffling it spoke.

"Waitin' f'ra 'bus, mate? You won' git one now. They all gorn."

"Oh?" I said. "That's nasty. Looks like a nice long tramp."

"Got far to go?"

"North London"

"Cuh—'at's a good step. Fond o' walkin'?"

He seemed chatty and companionable, and as I had all night for my journey, and was in the chatty mood myself, I encouraged him. We talked of getting stranded in out-of-the-way places, of the annoyances of things, and of this and of that. He seemed by his figure an overgrown youth, but he talked with a certain dash of experience. We stood away from the lamp, and the peak of his cap was pulled down. I could not see the upper part of his face. I saw only, and that in shadow, a thin, characterless mouth. The voice was the irresolute uneven voice of a youth who wanted to talk and was not used to company. He seemed the kind of amiable creature whom one passes over with a half-conscious glance and forgets.

It is a common type. He may be as big as other men, and talk as loudly, yet always he is ineffectual, never can he command attention. He never stands out. Even when he boldly addresses people he has trouble in capturing their interest. And this type always wants to be noticed, and will even thrust himself forward and try, weakly, to assert himself.

Sometimes he will even fall into crime, not from criminal intent, but purely from desire to redeem his self-respect, and to compel the consideration and respect that are given freely to other and less notable men. I once knew a

man of this type who committed a murder. He did not commit murder with the motive of advertisement; it was a deliberate crime of revenge. But, after the first shock of the event, he realised that he was now a person of importance to the whole country; and he made no attempt to bolt. He wanted (as he confessed when caught) to see how his acquaintances would behave towards him when they knew who he was. Yet he gained nothing by it. For, during the days when the hunt was up, he remained the same colourless personality; his bold deed had lent him nothing of character or force. Even when a group who knew him were discussing the matter, and he made some comments, they paid no attention to him. Even when, driven to anger by this last rebuff, he seized for one moment their attention with "Look 'ere—let me tell yeh somethink. It's me they're looking for. *I* done the Gravel Lane murder"—Even then, when he expected a glorious moment of uproar and confusion and wonder centred about his person; even then, they gave him only an instant's glance, laughed, and turned again to their own talk. Even with the horrid truth, he couldn't impress.

Well, this youth seemed to me, in the little I could see of him, and in his scrappy inconsequent talk, just such another—thin and lacklustre. His walk was a long-legged shamble. He assumed the casual air with too much diligence. He threw off a too-large air of world-knowledge. His wide uncertain mouth gaped indecently. He wasn't drunk, and I think he

wasn't quite sober. His talk was rational, but —it left you puzzled. There seemed to be something struggling underneath it. His manner, too, was furtive, with odd dashes of boldness and man-to-mannishness. He was an oaf.

Then he made a proposal. He had a room round about there, and if I didn't feel like a walk home, and would take in something, I could sit there till the early trams started—if I cared about it. I hesitated. I wasn't at all sure about him ; but he interested me.

"But," I said, "it's too late to get anything to take in."

He made a wide leave-it-to-me gesture. "No, it ain't. *I* know a place, if you got the money."

I went with him.

He walked me across the railway bridge at Old Ford, and down a street to the side door of a shop of some kind. Here he knocked, and whispered his wants. I paid over the money and ham and bread came out. Where he took me then, I don't know, for it was dark then and dark when I left to get the workmen's tram. But we walked through a grove of by-ways, and as we walked I was kept puzzled as to his character All this time I still had not fully seen his face. Really, there was nothing to mark him from other men ; and I told myself that it was the late hour, the misty evening, the silence and the strange place that lent him that something of the bizarre. His queer manner, his nervous bravado, is a manner found in many respectable

people. But with him I was still sensible of something I could not place. . . .

At last we got to his house, and once in his room I knew my man and his character. The little touches that had baffled me were explained. With one foot over the step I halted, and stared. I felt a sudden chill, as one coming, in the dark, into contact with a nameless damp substance. He caught my look, and, holding the bread, squirmed and giggled at me with wide toothy mouth. Hanging on the wall, by either side of the fireplace were, at a random count, between twenty and thirty plaits, curls, tresses, cuttings of hair, and hair-ribbons; gold, brown, black and auburn.

"Lookin' at my collection? Pritty, ain' they? Them golden ones—eh?"

He threw off his cap, and I saw his face clearly. His diffidence of the streets was gone and the face was itself. It was a flaccid face, with low listless eyes. It rose to a point at the forehead. It was the face of a fish.

I felt I must say something. "But what the devil—how——"

He grinned again and opened the packet of ham, cut the bread and made two sandwiches; then pointed to a wicker chair. He seemed not at all abashed at letting a stranger into his secret. In this room he was happy and at ease. He had now no pose, no reserve, no hesitation. He was quietly himself.

His most notable trait was a sort of private suppressed glee which would burst from the corners of his eyes and lips in the fleeting mo-

ments when he cast a glance at his " collection." Outside that room he would have passed anywhere as the amiable gawk I had thought him. Inside . . . When he had finished both of the sandwiches, he began to talk, not haltingly, as before, but in gushes of confidence and confession. He talked of his souvenirs as a bibliophile talks of his " finds " in books. He tried to work me up to share his enthusiasm in his hobby, as other harmless collectors will do.

" 'At one cors' me somethink—'em yeller curls wi' the blue ribbon. I di'n' 'arf 'ave a job gittin' them. I see 'er in Victoria Park, an' followed 'er two hours, an' on'y got me chance on a bus at Beffnal Green. An' 'at black one—I spent I d'no 'ow long in a pitcher-palace gittin' that. . . . 'Sa risky gaeme, y'know. I neely bin copp' sometimes."

He giggled, and went to the wall and took down the tresses, and ran them through his fingers. Slowly, with face bent, his hooded eyes half lit, he passed them through his fingers and across the back of his hand ; and something seemed to creep about that silent room and fill it with damp echoes and wreathing shapes and the slow bubbling of swamps. His mind unfolded itself before me in coils, and put things into my own mind—faint vapours from midnight forests ; the ecstasy of the goat. . . . He took down others and hung them over his arm, and gave them his venomous caresses. He chuckled. Thin-faced, thin-lipped, lanky and blink-eyed, he stood. His drooping attitudes and slow gestures uttered the unutterable.

From time to time he ejaculated a toneless, abrupt laugh, as he spoke of his captures, and he had a trick of writhing in his clothes. . . . Now and then he gibbered.

As he continued to eat, his ecstasy grew. He gave away his darkest thoughts. He spoke, with a nudge, of "other things" that he had got. He nodded and chuckled. Things that . . .

He was on his knees, rummaging at something, when I heard a knocker-up go down the street.

In the Street of Beautiful Children

I WAS ever of opinion that the children of the East End are more beautiful and more buoyant than the children of Kensington Gardens, and I think any artist who knows his London streets will agree with me. East of the Pump he will find child-beauty in large clusters, in streetfuls and lanefuls; but the West, even in holiday-time, will yield him little. I have before me an exquisite volume of camera-studies of the child—street-children, high-school children, children of the rich and children of Lord This or the Hon. Mrs. That; and easily the children of the poor outshine the others. How set and lifeless are our young lords and honourables. Finely featured they are and of elegant carriage, but repressed, lustreless; all zest refined out of them; consciously sitting for their portraits. They have that dull distinction that goes with fitness and breeding. One appreciates, but does not admire. They are products of intensive culture, like pedigree puppies. They have the air of the colts of thoroughbreds, sleek and sound. But beauty is wanting. For beauty cannot be bred; it happens, and visits seldom by invitation.

But turn the page, and there—how full of urge and animation and character are the studies in the playground, the parks and the streets. Dear, rumpled, knockabout children, impudently posed in the abandon of childhood

or caught secretly in tense moments of application. Here are the proud, the sly, the sweet, the petulant ; here are faces of cherubs and homely kissable faces ; radiant limbs and wonderful curl-laden heads. Here are big lustrous eyes and sparkling eyes, and pensive eyes, and bright round expressive mouths, and quiet eyes of fun ; and little girlhood in all its wonder and grace. The little girl of the streets is an elusive creature ; not quite a child and not an immature woman. She is more than child and less than child. The boy we know. He is a man-child, blunt and obvious. But there are no terms that hold the little girl—that bundle of tossing frocks and streaming hair and candid eyes, and the strange grave beauty that has bemused grown men—Schubert, Swift, even Ruskin.

In this book, this beauty is joyously gathered. The collector has given us a gallery of grace. He shows us children of all ages at work, at play, in the home, in the gutter, and asleep ; good children and naughty children, laughing children and crying children. The spirit of Spring irradiates every page. There are little bare legs, and sweet-curved stockinged legs, flower-like limbs and fat dimpled limbs. There are faces carrying in such profusion that quality that we call charm that even the camera plate and the page it fills is suffused with it. It shines from the book straight into you. There are torn trousers and lace frocks, rags and tatters and Sunday Best. It is a golden treasury of childhood, and my favourites are the beautiful figures of the children of the poor streets.

Often I have wandered in those streets, and wondered whether Shoreditch or Poplar, Homerton or Wapping held the palm for lovely children, whether this or that Council School could outshine the others, and whether the beauty was concentrated or scattered impartially among all. Now I have made my decision. I have found one street which, above all others, is a street of beautiful children, packed with grace of form and sweet feature. I found it one Monday morning when, hard-up and at a loose end for a job, I took on a round of rent-collecting in Stepney. Coming to that street after that tour was like coming upon a blessed green prospect after a stony desert.

Rent-collecting is not a job that I would lightly undertake again. It is only a degree or so more pleasant than the job of bum-bailiff. It is at once a mean and a delicate business. Few can perform it efficiently, or would care to perform it. Even the tact and urbanity and command of Lord Curzon would be severely tested by its occasions. The good rent-collector needs to be swiftly adaptable. He must adjust his manner to the peculiar temper of each household. He must be harsh here, affable there, man-to-man-like in this street, sympathetic in that, and unbending in t'other. He must handle his clients with an easy hand, and must know just where pressure should be applied and where relaxed. He should have sympathy for their difficulties and a knowledge of all their tricks. He should know whether it is all right to let Mrs. A carry over yet another week, and whether

Mrs. B shall be sternly admonished and threatened with immediate procedure.

Apart from the difficulties of the job itself, its circumstances are deeply disagreeable. A tour of the back streets of Stepney on a wet Monday morning makes a cheerless start for the week, and calls up all reserves of character and endurance. My book took me through hidden streets of distress, through dolorous alleys and dishevelled squares into a world of rheumatism and the price of bread. I went through Eastfield Street, Duckett Street, Ocean Street, Dupont Street and White Horse Lane. It was a round of uncomely sights and staggering smells ; broken hovels, bare floors, and hilarious people.

A torrent of rain had fallen the night before, and every house I visited delivered its usual hot grumble, and then broke into the usual long dry laughter. " Can't 'elp seeing the funny side o' things, y'know." In some cases, the husband had stayed away from work to have a go at the rent-man. And I couldn't blame him. Ceilings had given way ; beds were damp ; bedrooms were dripping with water ; basements were flooded ; and in them stood querulous people, angry for their rights, yet only pleading for them ; conscious of wrongs, yet fearing to speak out, instead of setting fire to the whole damned street. Everywhere I heard the same cry—" *When 're* they going to do something ? I've told 'em about it till I'm sick of telling 'em. Just look at it." I learnt that day the farce of the Rent Act and the operations of the Health Ministry. The Rent Act is a fine friend of the

slum landlord. If the rent is in arrears—and it usually is—he is under no compulsion to make repairs. While the house is in that state, he cannot raise the rent; but then he is already doing very well at present rates, and to raise them would probably mean that there would be no tenants for them. So he lets the house go on as it is, knowing—cunning brute—that the husband, being a man of his hands, will probably fix up some makeshift repairs of his own.

I was told that the "Health People" had been round once or twice, but I could hardly believe it. Many of those houses, even to a casual, inexpert view, would have been condemned by the R.S.P.C.A. as stables. Water was coming in through paneless windows, under the doors, through window-mouldings and elsewhere. Rats were abundant. Clouds of flies buzzed in every room. Doors didn't fasten. Fourteen shillings a week is the rent of these holes. Some are even let "furnished" at nine shillings a room. Furnished. A broken bed, a mattress, blanket and pillow, a lame chair, a table and a washstand. In each of the tiny rooms lived a family of husband, wife, and one or two children. I cannot in a rapid phrase describe the condition of these rooms. Only the crowded detail of a Hogarth picture could convey any idea of their confused desolation. Tremendous battles, clearly, had been fought to make them comfortable, but the result was only a littered battle-field, an insane discomfort, a disorderly rout of disorder. Hardly one of the common conveniences of life was here. Every-

thing was futile, counterfeit. Every drop of water must be carried up from the tap over the sink downstairs. Coal is bought by the pound. Table utensils must be used in turn. "After you with the spoon, Dad." "Lend us the fork, Mother." All families wash at the common sink. Between the bed and the table is perhaps a space of six inches, and usually one of the children has to have his meals on the bed.

From the top landing of a bare, eighteen-inch staircase, three rooms opened from a space of about one square yard. Crowding this space was a wire cage, in which were two sitting hens. In one room I saw a sick man, reclining half-naked on the bed and making dismal noises. In another, whose opposite walls I could touch with extended arms, the husband, black from work, was bolting his midday meal of porridge and potatoes. In the other, three children, home from school, were having dinner—bread-and-margarine and tea. Their young heads crowded over the tiny table. They ate against time, letting no crumb fall, saying no word, but gazing open-eyed at the stranger, and sometimes missing their step with the slice of bread, and grazing their hanging hair with it. Each room hummed with flies, and struck hot to the face. It being Monday, the usual "poor" smell of the house, which is acute and tense, was over-ridden by the despondent smell of washing-day.

That house was the worst I saw, but many ran it close; and I was amazed that the tenants could restrain themselves to receive me with no more than a grumble.

I had few defaulters, for in many of the streets

the families were just back from hopping. 'Opping ain't what it uster be, as anyone will tell you, but the skilled worker can still make a good thing out of it; and these streets were flush. It is only a side-line with them; a sort of working-holiday. The staple industry is fish-curing, which is carried on in the backyards of every other house.

My entry into each street set it moving, and as I knocked at the first door other women came hurrying to their doors with their greasy books and their fishy money and their arms covered with scales, and stood awaiting me. Most of the street doors were wide open, and through them I stepped straight into the front parlour. Where there were babies, the doorways were wedged with a protecting board, about two feet high, and over the top of the board peered Master Baby. This is a common custom of poor streets. It enables baby to amuse himself with the sight of the street and to take the "fresh" air, while mother can get on comfortably with the washing or the fish-curing, knowing that he cannot adventure into the perilous gutter.

At every door, after the grumble, I had a few civil words from mother or father.

"I think you ought to know about 'er at Number Twenty. I've told your people about 'er before. She ain't respectable, y'know. Four different men she 'ad in last week. Friends of 'er 'usband's, *she* says. But we ain't seen no 'usband. Married at the bed-rail, if you ask me. Not that I'm one to make mischief, Gawd knows, but that sorter thing makes a street so low."

Among the old couples there were no defaulters. How they live on their old-age pensions, and pay fourteen shillings a week, even with the help of a young-man-lodger, I cannot guess. It's their secret. Their homes, being free of children, were better kept than the others, and better furnished — even over-furnished — with the slow collections of years. Spotlessly clean most of them were, so that they looked like a freshly bathed youth in tramp's rags; clean and cosy, if you can accept the thick smell that must go with cosiness in these parts. After all, what's the use of opening your windows when your stale air is only replaced by the stinks of the streets? Better to put up with the close food-and-bed smell. Every parlour was crowded with ornaments; hundreds, I would say. Mantelshelves were loaded with poor bric-à-brac. Sideboards were cluttered with souvenirs of past seaside holidays. Where there was a piano, that too was loaded with faded photographs. Every wall was covered with pictures of some sort, if only magazine covers or pictures cut from the illustrated papers; and forlorn relics of forgotten Christmases filled the dim cells of kitchens with discordant rumours of revelry and frolic. I found something at once saddening and stimulating in these doughty efforts at beauty and embellishment; something of gallantry and gaiety; something fine and resolute that is native to the poor; and, cheerless and bothered as I then was, I finished my round with easy step. My spirit was renewed.

And when, turning from these houses of the old, and their struggle for grace, I came

suddenly into the street of youth and bountiful beauty, all my depression vanished, and my heart leapt up. There before me stretched the Street of Beautiful Children, and at sight of this common little street of Stepney locked inside other streets, but crowded with the most beautiful children I have seen in any part of London, I forgot my troubles. I will not name it, but if you make a journey through Stepney at midday or evening, when the children are out of school, and look down each by-way of White Horse Lane, you will quickly discover the Street of Beautiful Children. You will not find there the radiant, assertive beauty of the well-fed, well-clothed children of Mayfair and Kensington, but rather a pathetic, wistful evocative beauty—deep-set and wholly unconscious of itself. Fastidious people might stand a little aloof from this beauty, denying it because of the dirt and street assoilment that so often overlies it. But it is there—a loveliness that shines under the dirt like a Toledo blade under its rust, and, in its gross setting, touches the heart with melancholy.

This beauty is not bred and nurtured in the home. Almost every hour of the children's lives, except those spent in school and bed, is spent in the dun streets. They take their breakfasts to the streets, and their teas; and those for whom mother has not been able to contrive a "sit-down" midday meal take their dinners there.

It is an unlovely street, of blunt outlines; as straight and bare as a sword. The road is asphalte, and the houses are brick cubes, without garnish

or decorative detail. Its colour is that of French mustard. Its very respectability increases its misery. It is not even broken by raggedness, by torn curtains or battered roofs, or the last despairing flourishes of decay. At early morning or late night it is as bald and blank as a corridor in a military barracks.

But at the mid-hour of the day and at evening, the children make it a true Hans Andersen street, a street of frolic movement and effervescent gesture. In no other street in London will you find such a wealth of young physical joy. Out of the wretched doors leaps urgent beauty. From upper windows wonderful heads smile down upon you, and—if your appearance is peculiar from the local type—these heads cry shrill and petulant remarks. Dark-haired, pale little girls, of the rich, sad pallor that belongs to the East, stand at doorways and look and look into nothing ; exquisite statuettes of ebony and alabaster. Barelegged and barefooted girls dart across the street, the random breeze taking their frocks, the thin sunlight flashing into profile their sharp outlines. Thick-curled little boys squabble and struggle under the low parlour windows, crying to mother for news of dinner. The narrow roadway twinkles with legs and flashes with the bright hair and coloured and discoloured frocks of little girls running midday " arrants " for mother. The forgotten game of diabolo is still popular here, and its urgent attitudes gladden the street with swift figures, in the felicitous poise between movement and repose.

Such an accumulation of beauty at once

delights and saddens. But for their voices and manners you would say they were dream-children; and any childless person, looking down this street, would, I think, wish to seize one of these fragments of childhood and adopt it, and soften the voice and manners into harmony with the faces. For it is pitiful to think that time and toil, stress and hunger, soon will steal their beauty from them, and that the glory and loveliness will pass away.

One would like to hold it for ever, to cherish this young grace and preserve it from the brute contacts of its alleys. One would like to take each child from that street, and from the weary way into which it will lead them when they are older; but that would be wrong unless you took the parents too. For what would mother do if Lucy or Johnny were taken from her? The Street of Beautiful Children is also a street of happy people; children and parents delighting in each other; the parents struggling for the best that circumstances afford for their darlings, and the children glad of what they get. It is the environment that should be altered. It is the cramped spaces of the home that so quickly kill all beauty of heart and face. In such surroundings the struggle to preserve the decencies is hopeless; and soon vitality is lowered and self-respect corroded, and beauty fades. That is why I want to take the children away—not from their families to which they are ornament and delight; not even from Stepney; but from the wretched rabbit-hutches of Stepney. And those children in whose homes the best is not made of things, who have careless mothers

and dispirited fathers, or wicked and cruel, those I would like to carry away to a home where their hearts should know the little precious things that help hearts to grow in beauty.

Not into a "Home"—oh, mocking word!—and its cold squalors and brutalising system, but into an ordinary happy household. God forbid that I should be a party to sending any child from the light-limbed freedom of this street, which, to their rich minds, is a wonderland, into the hygienic horrors of a Home. I know too much about them. Failing a true home, they are better where they are than in a Charity Home.

"As cold as charity" is a common figure of speech among the poor, who are best qualified to employ it; and very apt it is.

The daily pageant of the city streets is hourly broken by many ugly incidents, flashes of distress, and shocks to civic pride; but the very ugliest spectacle of the pageant is one that evokes remarks, if any, of complacent approval; I mean a procession of children from a Home or Charity School. At the first sight of the little regiment, and the first sound of the tramping feet, the faces of the onlookers smirk benignly. The poor orphans! What a touching sight! What a splendid thing these Homes are for the children!

And yet . . . Childhood implies freshness, starry lustre, and blithe movement—all the little gracious flakes of another life which soon are shed by the world's increasing contact. The street of beautiful ragged children has its share of these things, and the urchins move with

the wild grace of young animals. The well-nurtured and carefully-tended child of Kensington Gardens has them, too, in less ample degree. But these other unfortunates—what the public can perceive in their situation to "touch" or gratify I do not know. They are a procession of cowed captives. Their movements are heavy; of delight they know little, and their early freshness is already tarnished. They are socially branded; the Charity Children. They are so many parading grotesques, advertising the altruism of their protectors. Study their faces, and you will see that, although chubby, they are blank and witless. The eyes are clear, but without zest; the lips unused to laughter. The features are heavy with thick food and enforced hebetude. They march like prisoners, and you may see that they look upon the people and the other children in the streets with bewilderment, as creatures from another world, which they are; and they would, like long-term prisoners, be disconcerted if suddenly released into that large, bright, moving world of freedom and independence. They know nothing of it, and, if unguided, they move with faces like baffled sheep.

Pity the children of the poor!

Not for the hardships of the situation into which they were born, but for their sufferings at the hands of the philanthropist, who rescues them from the roaming plain of poverty, and carries them into barracks. I have had bitter familiarity with these Homes for Orphans, contumeliously named Rescue Schools, Waifs and Strays, Industrial Schools, Pauper Schools, Working Schools, etc., and I do not suffer any

glow of complacence when I see children dragged from the Street of Beautiful Children and carried into them. I know the exacerbation of distress which they will suffer from their hideous garb and rule-of-thumb routine, and their futile agony against the callous machinery of philanthropy which will blindly bruise them; and I know what the child thinks of his "rescuers." I know that these Homes mean to children what the immediate prospect of prison means to the normal respectable man. At first the child is horrified and cannot make himself believe that these gaunt people can mean to hold him within their grip for a term of years which is eternity to him. He is stunned, then hotly rebellious. But quickly he is given "special attention," and soon he is without capacity for anger, incapable of independent thought, submissive; too apathetic even to think of running away from his captors. He becomes a part of the Home—a mere organism. These places are not without means of coercing the recalcitrant.

Look upon the beautiful free faces and dense tresses of the children of this Stepney street, and then look at the cold-dumpling faces of Charity children, shorn and shaved and ludicrous. They are not children; they are little old men and women, goblins of the underworld. The children of the poor are, I suppose, fair game for any experimenting philanthropist. Systems have to be tried somewhere, and it is better to try them upon those who have no influential parents or friends to raise misleading outcries in the press. So long as the public sees official statistics and the spectacle of physically healthy

and well-clothed children, it is comfortably sure that Good Work is being done ; and it goes home to dinner, without enquiring further.

It does not know—or care—that most of these Homes are a hundred years behind the age. They are conducted still on the principles of nineteenth-century charity. The children are well-fed and tended (no doubt of that) for they are being trained for Work, as useful citizens ; they are as valuable as horses. But their bodies are clothed in the clothes of contumely, their souls are starved, and their minds are fed with false doctrines of conduct, and bent and twisted to the System's will. Their proprietors (I think the term is justified) claim that they have snatched them from evil surroundings and conditions of neglect and ill-treatment, and have given them a Good Home, where comfort and sound training are lavished upon them in good measure. The term should be " Good Stabling," for all that the children get are what the sensible farmer gives his cattle—shelter, food, exercise, and hygiene. Only the farmer is honest about it. He does not mis-call it Charity, Philanthropy, or Kindness to the Weak ; he gives it its true name : Good Business.

You have only to look at the children to see that they are utterly uncared-for, in the true sense. You can see that they never know caresses, or sweet foolish words, or the hearty cuff and personal admonishment of a parent. In the Homes they are a Herd, and the treatment is impersonal. They are what the directors brazenly call them—" assets " of the nation, " material " for the services. But, if I know

children, they would much rather suffer the rough treatment of an alcoholic father or a neglectful mother than the cold, studied " care," and cold, ceremonial punishments of the Home. Personal injustice is more easily endured than impersonal justice. The most dishevelled hovel, the most careless and kickful parents, are points of personal contact, of intimacy. They carry a rough, rude cheer, and, even if life in the hovel is explosive and indecent, the child develops himself more rightly there than among the cold walls and hard floors and rigid rules of Charity. He learns independence. He leads a life of stimulating hazard and adventure, ever alert for the moment's occasions and the rich turns of the new day, and delighting in it. For the poor, in all their rude aspects, are picturesque and personal, while the rich are never picturesque : only rich. I wonder, does the reason for the savage suppression of the colour and movement of the poor lie there ? Is this why the rich, unable themselves to achieve colour, are so rigorous in " putting it down," in seizing the young poor and re-forming them to a pattern, dull and flat like themselves ?

Whatever the reason, that is what they do. When the Charity, supported by the rich, gets the street-child, its first action is to dope him to insensibility by drill. Then it holds him fenced from life, and sucks him dry of spirit and wits and enterprise. Initiative is taken from him, and so long as he is " good " (that is, dull and automatic) his three fat meals a day will be laid for him. The Home, while giving him food, clothing, education, organised games, moral

training and a sort of aloof kindness—everything to fit him effectually for service—robs him of his most precious possession, individual character. It claims to "mould" his character, and the word is apt. He *is* "moulded"—to something very mean and low. He is forced to move with the herd, and, if to think at all, to think only with the herd. He is trained not to develop himself to his highest pitch for the betterment of the world and the enjoyment of its pleasant things; not to let his faculties and fancies find themselves, but to get into harness and become an asset of the nation; to serve, not to participate.

The spirit of the herd—they call it team-work—is a vicious spirit. You find it in Charity schools and in armies, and you find it directing those deadening organisations, Boy Scouts and Girl Guides. The spirit of these organisations is a negation of the soul. It calls for the most vile and debasing of surrenders—not material surrender to an invincible enemy, but moral surrender to weak friends: surrender of character to the team. Less base is the woman who surrenders her virtue than the youth or man who yields or lowers his character and abilities to the mean of his fellows. And children in these places are trained for that very end—to give up all the beauty, character, power and unique quality that is their power for the benefit of the fools, that they may not o'ertop their fellows. Never yet did a great man make one of a team. He may have led a team, but always he was himself, moving along his own lines, never sinking himself to the level of the laggards; and if

the crowd called him to order they called in vain. No character of worth can ever efface itself, or, if it does, it commits the unspeakable sin. That sin, soldiers, and children of the Homes, are trained daily to commit—to deny their own gifts for the sake of the crowd. You see it in Parliament, in the Army, in Trades Unions, in the athletic field, in the public school, but specially in the Charity Refuge. There is one great law in this country which is well supported by the established caste : *you must not be distinguished.* It was made by and for the dull majority to keep the brighter minds—the men who *know*—down to their own low level ; but happily, as you know, it seldom succeeds. Pegasus can never be harnessed effectively to the plough. But in the " Home " all the most modern machinery is employed to break the brilliant down to the team.

When you have seen the Homes, you can almost visualise the business men and cold women who direct them. You will note about them a certain greasy complacence—the mark of those who are Doing Good, defending the children of the poor. From what it is that they are defending them, I do not know, unless it is from all beauty, interest, joy, and self-expression. These things, I am sure, they would never consider as the birthright of the children of the poor, and would be surprised and amused if you asked them why they could not conduct their schools on a curriculum similar to that enjoyed by their own sons and daughters. They are self-assured that they are Doing Good. The children could present them with a different

view, but they never talk to the children on the level, as man to man. Your philanthropist does not see the children of the poor as God sees them, but as objects for his own loving-kindness, to be patted on the head like good dogs. He carries into detailed practice the harsh precepts of the Church Catechism, that monument of class-distinction, which might have been made by a twelfth-century lord for his serfs. He extinguishes all the high lights of character. He strips them of their self-respect, and hides their incipient grace under clothes as brutalising and degrading as convict garb ; and shows them off, at feeding-times, to charitable sight-seers, as a well-trained troupe.

I am not suggesting that there is any deliberate unkindness in his method ; but there is a frugality of kindness that is perhaps worse. He does not, or will not understand that the children of the poor are creatures of light and ardour, as well as bodily appetite. He confines the beautiful fluidity of child-life within his own rigid lines, and distorts it to his own ends. The little feet that should have wings are bound down by brutal boots, and the flying limbs are curbed. His system is a degradation of childhood, a denial of beauty, a blasphemy, a patronage of the helpless. He even permits doctors to make experiments upon the children's bodies. This I know : but I have not heard even a rumour that Eton boys are subject to inoculation experiments. To all critics he replies, in the large manner, " Pooh ! Sentimental nonsense ! " I am no sentimentalist, and would rather see the children left to fight and frolic and go hungry

and ragged in the Street of Beautiful Children than see them broken-in like horses in hygienic Homes. The rags of the street-boy are clothes, and they dress him fitly, and belong to him. They are often his own creation, and he is happy in them, and his movements are free and full, as they should be. The uniform of the charity child is not dress, but harness ; they are animals, patient under the yoke.

In these places they are cut off from the world and from all appeal. In many Homes the children are not let out until they have completed their training, which means that they live for eight or nine years like performing animals, under a system formulated and calculated to nip and kill any shoot of original feeling, to thwart any groping for self-expression ; and departures from the strait-waistcoat rule are punished with gross and obscene punishments. They rise at a bell, march to dining-hall to a bell, sing grace to a bell, sit to a bell, begin eating or stop eating to a bell, march into class, into chapel, to a bell, form up for drill to a bell, play on the signal of a bell, and go to bed to a bell.

Every moment of their daily life is planned. Leisure is forbidden. If they are not working, they must play organised games, and play hard ; and, if the directors could control the soul's wanderings during sleep, they would do so.

If these institutions are really the Good Homes they claim to be, why are so many desperate attempts made by the older boys at escape ? I never knew any child in a charity school who had not, day and night, a deep-set longing to get

away from it. Indeed, I have known boys who nightly, with simple faith, prayed to God that the school should be burnt down. And I always rejoice when I hear of successful escapes from Homes and Reformatories.

Bad as the ordinary orphanage or charity school is, from the child's point of view, the reformatories are a thousand times worse, being appointed with all the apparatus of Reform. They exist for the purpose of reclaiming "bad" children and restoring to them their self-respect. Actually, they are factories for the production of determined criminals, shorn of every shred of self-love or self-respect. They are run on methods of malevolence; they manufacture hate. Let a boy be sent to one of these places, for offences which, in a student or undergraduate, are expiated by apologies and money-payments, and he is a law-breaker for life. He is corrupted by his fellows and maltreated in the name of the State; tortured by Rules and Regulations and Drills, as the Inquisition tortured in the name of the True Faith. Glimpses of life in these places have lately been vouchsafed to the public through coroners' inquests; but what drawn-out agony it is that can drive a high-spirited youth of seventeen to murder or suicide, God and the officials only know, for they are caged, these children, without communication with the world. Visiting justices? Travelling inspectors? Yes, but are they wholly disinterested? Are they picked from the public as jurymen are picked? And do they bring to the boys the sympathy they give to their own class?

The girls' reformatories, if not so harsh in degree, are equally harsh in principle. The breaking-in and bruising are the same. The forms of punishment are equally obscene, and they degrade young girls in soul and self-respect as quickly as—though in a different way—the system of the brothel. The only difference is that the reformatory permits—and compels—them to keep their physical chastity. For the rest, these Houses of Correction break them on the wheel of obedience as effectually as the house of ill-fame; and, after a few years of their oppression, no girl leaves their gates but as an enemy of society.

You are not supposed to hear the secrets of these places—the long-drawn misery, the heart-ache, and the self-mutilations arising from the misery. You are told only just as much as is good for you; for, if the truth were made plain, you might be moved to interfere and stop the necessary and blessed work of reformation. Much dirty work has to be done in the public interest, and no doubt it is a wise ruling that withholds the disturbing details. When Charles Reade, in some of his novels, described the procedure of prison-life and lunatic asylums, people said, a little uncomfortably, "Over-drawn! Exaggerated! Such things don't happen in this England of ours!" And they would say the same if they were permitted to know the blasting details of life on a training-ship. But those who are so satisfied with this England of ours would do well to make some investigation into the methods of authority towards the helpless, and learn "how men their

brothers maim" and how women torture their young sisters. Only this year, 33 young Borstal girls were put in irons—yes, irons.

Charles Reade is read to-day only for his "story," and "De Profundis" as a piece of literature. Few people are concerned to know whether conditions are so very much improved. In any case, it would be made tremendously difficult for any private person, however his conscience troubled him, to discover the truth. He might procure admission to a school, but he would see it working only as engines work when the engineer starts them up for the amusement of the curious. Only the children could tell him the truth, but he would be permitted to speak only to chosen children, and not then alone; and, even if he reached the others, they would be fearful of telling him much of their heart's misery, since they are always, as a result of the system, bewildered by questions and suspicious of the kindly stranger, when not inarticulate. Many are so blunted that they have come to regard the system as no more demeaning to themselves than a police-court fine to an adult. You may study the Reports of these places—reports as cold and impersonal as the walls of the institutions—but what do these Reports convey? "During the month of March six boys attempted escape. All were recaptured and suitably punished." Just that, "Punished." One reads the word, and passes on, conceiving no picture of the child, half-paralysed with terror, being dragged back to the Home; no picture of the defilement of body and soul; the screams of torment, the foul face of the

flogger. It is not intended that you should see these things. Charity does not love the candid light of the sun. Charity and rescue move mysteriously, with the padded feet of midnight murder.

If the publisher and the police and the National Vigilance Society would permit me, I would give you the true full horror of the business of punishment, and I think you might then feel that the treatment of the delinquent has not advanced far beyond the eighteenth century, and that these Homes are not entirely the pleasant sanatoria that the eye-winking inspectors find them. But just conceive the spectacle of a half-clothed girl of seventeen firmly held down by a brawny matron, while another coldly tortures her under the watchful eye of the doctor, and the room rings with vain cries on God and man for mercy. What is the offence that has merited this torment? Murder, tyranny, secret poisoning, swindling the public, high treason, cruelty to children, fraudulent company-promoting, sending rotten ships to sea? No. Running away from a good home. And for this work of reclamation, you pay.

There is one who remembers too clearly those monstrous moments when he first witnessed an orphanage flogging. He will always remember them. Two boys had attempted to run away. Miserably for them, they failed, and, after one day out, were dragged back by the neck. For a week they were kept isolated.

Then, one chill morning at eight o'clock, an order came for the whole school to form up in

the big schoolroom. They were marched in and kept at "attention" for some minutes. Then, on the dais, appeared a Director of the school, the headmaster, the school doctor, the bailiff (carrying a frightful thing under his arm) and the two little culprits, their faces grey, without light or glow. The headmaster spoke: rehearsed the facts of their crime, and announced their punishment—six strokes of the birch. A ripple ran through the assembled school, a shock.

"Silence!"

The boy who was witnessing this horror for the first time felt sick. He could not believe that these men were going to do this thing to these children. The men held themselves casually. The grey, thick-lipped City stockbroker, who subscribed his £500 each year towards the Good Work, which entitled him to be present on these occasions, had his hand in his pocket, and was chatting with the headmaster. The bailiff wasn't interested; he stood twiddling the instrument which he carried.

It was a dim, curdled morning of January, and over that bleak hall hovered something dark and gloating. An order was given. The two boys, with the stiff movement of sleep-walkers, obeyed, and stood before their comrades in abasement. One was called forward. He shuffled to the spot indicated. The thick lips dropped another order, and he was made to crouch in a posture that annihilated all decency, honour, and boyhood.

The headmaster took the thing from the bailiff, posed himself, and lifted his arm . . .

At the hiss of the instrument and the scream of the victim, the School shuddered and gasped. He writhed round the platform, and his screams cut the thick morning air, and cut and shamed the other boys. The new boy was class-mate with this lad, and knew him as a bright, eager boy, merry, clean-minded, serious and proud. And here he was, twisted by his masters into obscene and ludicrous shapes. The boys hung their heads and wouldn't look. An order was barked: "Heads up!" Then, to the boy: "Over again!"

The second stroke fell. The boy staggered before he screamed; then screamed in long wails.

"Down you go!"

A boy in the crowd fainted, and was carried out. From behind him the new boy heard a snigger. He turned, and found that it came from a group of teachers. . . . The white-washed hall grew dim—a little circle of a waving instrument and a leaping figure, shot through with screams; and, at the back of the platform, the second culprit, awaiting his torture with the eyes of a dead fish and a paper face. . . . At the third stroke, the boy, screaming for mercy, turned from one to the other on the platform—a mass of disordered clothes. He tried to run, but his trousers at his feet were effectual chains. He achieved only a grotesque shamble, before the bailiff seized him. This time he was held over by the bailiff. Dazed with pain he called upon his mother. He shouted upon God. He began to babble "Our Father, which art in Heaven . . ."

But there was none to hear him. And the torment went on.

. . . . . .

Only those, as I have said, who have been inmates of these places, and who are left with the power to remember, can tell anything; and few of them are willing to do so. I have met many ex-reformatory boys and girls, and all of them have in their faces, in the depths of their eyes, that something that time can never cure, that they can never live down and never avenge. The world has done something to them which lives with them and repeats itself in dreams and subconscious memory. They have seen something of horror. They know too much and too early of shame and despair. The child's individuality is a precious possession and the indignities and obscenities which are heaved upon them in these places in the name of Rescue and Reformation are things which they can never forgive.

The girls have told me of the long sobbing nights (sobbing is an offence), the aching hearts, the biting of the lips under the solitary punishment, when, like maniacs, they were handcuffed and bound within a body-belt; and such things coming in the most delicate and gracious years of child-life leave an enduring impression of horror and disgust which colours every moment of life and every new experience of life. But with most of them the memories are so searing and brutalising that they cannot and will not talk of them, even to intimate friends. That is where authority has the pull; it not only torments, but silences the evidence.

Here you may say: "Yes, this is all very well, but what about it? Crime must be punished, or none of us would be safe." I don't care what you say—no offence against Society merits this torture. And nine-tenths of these children are not criminals. Reformatories are for poor children only; no undergraduate or rich man's son or daughter is to be found there. The University yahoo may destroy college gates, and knock old men's eyes out, and break shop windows, and hold up traffic, and assault policemen, but his offences are "rags," outbursts of "high-spirited youth." The children who are "in" our reformatories are "in" for much milder offences than these. The working boy in Shoreditch, at a loose end on Sunday, lets his "high spirits" get the better of him and indulges in a small, mild rag about the streets, and is immediately taken to the station. If it is his third offence, and his parents label him as "beyond control," he is good for three or four years of reformation in a Home, and all that that religious word embroiders.

The 'Varsity ruffian may break into a struggling tradesman's shop, smash his windows, destroy his stock, and assault him, and he is fined. The street boy knocks an apple off a stall and gets four years of slavery. It's just the difference between being a rich man's son and a poor man's son. The one commits burglary, bringing, perhaps, disaster on a family; and it is called a lark. The other has a lark, which hurts nobody, and he is called a potential criminal, and is sent to a Home and

kept good by punishments which have driven many children to self-destruction. But, in any discussion of this matter, the advocate of violence has always won, and, I suppose, always will win. The sadists can alwaps fling at the humane man the jeer of "flabby sentimentalist," and under the cloak of rough manliness, and, by euphemising an obscenity in the cheery phrase, "a jolly good hiding," can secure public sanction for their lewdness. "Our treatment makes a man of the boy." What sort of man?

The foulness and shame of corporal punishment are bad enough when it is practised on grown ruffians, but that this outrage should be inflicted upon the delicacy of elder childhood is a disgrace to the laws of this country. The child's sense of modesty is much stronger and keener than the adult's; and if it be said that forward children must be punished, and that disgrace is an effective punishment, I say that the disgrace of whipping is not punishment; it is an indecent assault; and every psychologist knows why certain people plead for its retention. Indeed, there exists in England a body of people anxious to promote corporal punishment of boys and girls, and actually publishing leaflets teaching methods of child-torture. It calls itself a League, and makes eloquent and lubricious appeal for the whipping, nursery fashion, of disobedient sons and daughters; especially it recommends it for daughters. One of their productions states that "whipping, to be effective, should be a science." Then follow elaborately minute directions, written with obvious

relish, which I will not offend you by transcribing, how to go about this business; how to undress the child, and how to use the hand, the slipper, the strap or the cane, and a gloating insistence on prolonging the ceremony "so that the child may feel the disgrace the more," and on "the increased feeling of shame as the children grow older."

It is precisely the language and style of the literature that is produced by back-street publishers in Paris and Brussels and Vienna. The police are quick to seize these productions when they are mailed to this country. Why the other vicious matter is allowed to go through the post I don't know.

. . . . . .

But the greatest cruelty of all is the injustice of the system, whereby the boy, as I have shown, who indulges in a few "larks," is dragged from home to spend the best years of his youth behind walls and to be crushed by a system. Figure yourself, charged with having no rear-light on your car, sentenced, by some monstrous mis-reading of law, to two years' hard labour, while similar offenders are fined twenty shillings; put in convict dress, cut off from decent intercourse, and, if, in your first bitterness, you disobey, punished with demeaning punishments. In that same spirit of bitterness against injustice, ninety reformatory children out of the hundred live their four or five years of incarceration. The other ten are perhaps menaces to society; but society, instead of concerning itself individually with their reclamation, delegates the task to "committees," "bodies," "institu-

tions," and their staffs. A sight of the type that composes the staffs should be sufficient to awaken disgust without more intimate detail. Hard-faced, cold, pedagogic—that is the type; creatures that once were men, lip-licking creatures capable of the most nauseous kind of brutality—brutality under orders. That is the type under whom these children spend their years of servitude; a pretty example for the humanising and reshaping of the citizen-to-be.

Yet still the placid rich support these places with money, and condemn poor people's boys and girls to them, piously and with self-gratulation. I wonder if they know what they are doing when they send a young girl to a reformatory, or an intelligent boy to a charity school? I hope not. I sincerely hope not. Still the governors and directors send out their unctuous appeals and prospectuses, belauding their own frigid zeal. Mr. Chadband and Mr. Gradgrind have, happily, almost disappeared from public life, but they are still secretly active behind the walls of our Charities. Mr. Barlow is there, too, superintending with his sleek admonishments, driving his dusty platitudes through the green territory of youth, and presiding with ponderous levity at Annual Festivals. You may perceive their touch in the style of the appeals. Here is one:

> "The children form a delightful family party and every possible amenity of family life is liberally bestowed upon them. Nothing is left undone to make the Home a home to which they will look back in years to come as the centre of their lives. The girls are sensibly trained for domestic service, an industry whose ranks have lately been sadly thinned by the

> deplorable spirit of the day; and the boys are trained for the manual crafts; and the whole aim of the Home is to produce God-fearing and right-minded citizens."

Yet still they flourish. Still the money comes in for restricting the sweet kingdom of childhood. Still the ugly triumphs over the beautiful, the mean over the noble; and still, quietly and deliberately, this rude, sharp-faced phantom of charity and well-doing parades mincingly and self-consciously with the brotherly love of St. Paul and the knowledge of love and God.

. . . . . .

So, if charity be in you, and the means to help the unhappy be at your hand, may I beg you to go to some trouble in the matter. The signing of a cheque for an orphanage is but a cheap and scamping evasion of responsibility. You may give ten thousand pounds to a charitable institution, but, if you have not love, your two minutes' labour will be as barren as State aid. Even if your money were beautifully used for beautiful ends, there is little grace in your lazy gifts. A flourish of the pen is little enough to do for a *worthy* cause, and here, I maintain, the cause is sadly wanting in beauty. Better to keep the money in your pocket than lend aid to these affairs. Let me beg you to take a little thought and trouble in distributing your surplus, and, instead of abetting, by your signature, the continuance of the Home systems, find for yourself some child or person in need (there are many in the Street of Beautiful Children) and succour that need by direct action. Make that child's food, clothing, and

education your personal affair. It means trouble, I know ; a lot of trouble, spread over some period ; whereas the cheque relieves you immediately of all thought or concern. You may plead press of affairs ; but much that I have written is written from personal knowledge, and the saving of one child from the squalors of a Home is no mean work. Putting it on the lowest plane (of self-interest) no child has a morsel of feeling for the Home or its subscribers, once he is out of it (how should he have ?) ; but your one child would remember you with gratitude for ever. If people thought less of the nation's children, and more of the individual child, there would be a better nation and thousands of happier children.

In the Streets of Don't-care

Among the general public Bohemia seems to be largely associated with artists and their Mollies; men with side-whiskers and girls in "art" robes, whose motto is "Vesti la djibbah." How this notion got about I don't know: Murger, I suppose. But in all my experience I have met few real poets, artists, or musicians who are Bohemians. I have usually found them as precise and formal as lawyers are supposed to be.

But there *is* a tractless Bohemia in London. It has nothing to do with the fine arts. It is peopled by the real wandering Bohemians; the common, hard-up, untalented Cockneys. Not at the supper-club or the theatrical dance will you find the nonchalant spirit of Bohemia. Bohemia is simply the habit of being oneself at all times and occasions; and you will find more of that spirit in the Good Pull Up For Carmen, even at the Athenæum, than you will in these other places. In the professional Bohemia individuality has little play. At Art balls and revels, at the Embassy Club and the Hambone Club, everybody is alike; all must conform to the prevailing mood and taste, and be gay or eccentric according to the occasion.

Bohemia is in the streets, not in cafés; in the

undistinguished clothes of workaday, not in quaint or fancy apparel. Get into the streets, and there you will meet it, and your wanderings about sunny pavements or in the dappled dusk of alleys will thread your every day with bright or mellow hours of adventure or intercourse. Where the Cockney is, there is Bohemia, and, so long as he exists, all plans for "brightening" London are absurd redundances.

The war has changed London but little, and the Cockney hardly at all. There is, perhaps, some spirit of restraint in the air, but it has not yet expressed itself materially. Everywhere there is a troubled fumbling after "reform" (whatever that may be); a desire to make things "better," to put down folly and to work for sweetness and light; but so far this is manifest only in a purification of certain of our main streets. Drink and the prostitute have less latitude than of old. The promenades of the two famous halls have been purged, and the girls driven into Leicester Square and harried out of it by policewomen into secret places. The Provence is gone; the Café de l'Europe is gone, and the Lounge is not itself. But what of that? Leicester Square is still Leicester Square, London's happiest open space, where one steps blithely.

As for the Cockney, nothing changes him. He is the essential Bohemian. The spirit of folly danced when he was born, and the supper-club people can achieve only a pale imitation of him and his graces. He is as he was in Dekker's day—truculent, sceptical, with large capacity for indignation and bright strokes of raillery;

but withal tolerant, touched with saline humours, and able to see himself and laugh at himself. That last, I think, is his most notable trait. His sense of humour plays not only upon others but upon himself. He cannot take himself seriously. He leaves solemnity to the acquisitive Northerner. If these others like to sweat and strive, let 'em. He prefers to taste life as it comes, and Getting On is the last thing that bothers him. The qualities that make for success are the very qualities that most arouse his laughter—solemnity, waggon-hitched-to-star, and organised recreation. He does not begrudge this success; he only finds it unamusing; and happily and fitly he drops his banana-skin under the heels of solemn soap-merchants and solemn artists.

The fashionable pleasures of London pass him by. What does he want with pleasure who has joy within him? The pleasures of the town are never made for him, but for the wealthy immigrants and their young. Midnight suppers, art balls, dance clubs and revels, exotic costume, the howl of the negroid Pan and the bellow of Bacchus interest him little: they are like sideshows at the White City, vulgar "attractions" for those incapable of creating their own entertainment. Artistic frivolity can never take root in our soil. The very name of London is a denial of the term. Our native coarse gusto is, as it were, a free dialect and none shall make a grammar of it. How shall the elegant syllables of "frivolity" mate happily with the thunderous music of "London"? They shall not.

London's delight comes in big and violent

gusts from the heart, and, while I have my banana, the sensation seekers may have their supper-and-dance clubs, where revue girls do their night's work over again and call it pleasure. Let those whose conception of a hot time in the old town is to dance all night get on with it. Have you seen the Englishman, even the volatile artist-Englishman, go through the motions of what he calls dancing? It is a sober parade round a hot room, with a woman, to the sticky rhythms of a thin band; a stiff, ungainly walk, as of school-children at drill, performed with set face and idiotic eye. Strange that the Englishman, who cannot and never will dance, has one idea of winter entertainment—dancing; that is, pottering about with a girl. It is to dancing as cork lino to a Persian rug. If its excuse is sex-attraction, why doesn't he do it properly, with cymbals and fire and invocations, instead of with this tepid capering? But the dance and the ball-room are incompatible. Frenzy and grace cannot live with white ties; it is more fluently expressed by graceless girls round a street organ. I have more respect for the clerk who picks up a girl on the sea-front and salutes Pan under the cliff, at the cost of a box of chocolates, than I have for these drawing-room triflers with sex.

Four hundred years ago, the common folk did dance, with frenzy and festal ecstasy, and knew what they were doing; and the titles and sweet airs of those old dances, and the pagan ritual that accompanied them, bring happy echoes to an ear surfeited with the machine-

made titles of modern dances : " Reve d'Amour," " Whispering," " Heart to heart," " Shadows," " Saucy," " Provoking," " Powder Rag," and that sort of thing. Meaningless titles these, but on sixteenth-century country greens they did better. Listen : " Green Stockings," " Ropely Village," " The Red Shore," " Temple Bar," " Goose and Gridiron," " Cushion Dance," " Parson's Green," " Windsor Tarass," " Farise's Fear," " Lie Down, Love," " Cherry Breasts," " Sellenger's Round," " Packington's Pound," " Cuckolds all A-row," " Joan's Placket is Undone," " Have at thy Coat," " Bobbing Joan," " Granny's Delight," " Blowzy Bella," and " Rub Her down with Straw." These are coarse ; the former only vulgar.

There's a whole moral world between the two qualities. The professional Bohemia is a finicky and vulgar Bohemia ; the Cockney's, coarse and human. Coarseness is healthy and of the spirit ; vulgarity an empty creation without a soul. It is the difference between Rabelais and the *London Mail* ; between Falstaff and " Fatty " Arbuckle ; between the Restoration comedies and Mr. Cochran's select revues ; between Bartholomew Fair and the seaside Kursaals ; between the four-ale bar of a pub and the Café Royal ; between London and Brighton.

Brighton prides itself on its Bohemian spirit, and certainly it has the spirit of the vociferous Bohemia. Its sea-front on Sundays is a microcosm of this vulgarity ; a galanty-show of racing men, the rough stuff of the London

stage, publicans, third-rate artists, blazing kerb-stone stockbrokers, motors, cigars, and the sumptuous "Juliets of the night." All these things are to be found, I know, in equal measure in London, but London has better things to balance them, while Brighton exists by and for these things. George IV, most vulgar of many vulgar kings, "made" Brightelmstone, and I am sure he would be delighted with it to-day. The "fat adonis of forty" would find much congenial company, for the parade on Sunday morning is a parade of Fatties and their kept women. This parade is rehearsed on Saturdays, when life on the Brighton road is made unbearable for ordinary people by a whirlwind of limousines, fatness, Corona Coronas and patchouli. The sharrabang may be noisy, but spontaneous noise is not always so vulgar as certain demonstrative attitudes in a Rolls-Royce. All day the hills and vales of the Brighton road re-echo wheezily: "Thank God for the war!" I think I prefer a sharrabang chorus of "Stop yer ticklin', Jock!"

Brighton is the Holy City of the Cheap-Rich. When the obscure merchant has made money, his first thought is an automobile; his second—a "fixture" at Brighton. In the agreeable company of his fellows and their "birds" at Brighton he learns to talk of women like a nasty-minded schoolboy, and, by his conduct, he has made a week-end at Brighton the subject of smirking music-hall jokes. This week-end is a study of plethora. It is an example of the Cheap-Rich's notion of good living—too much of everything.

It is a strident display of over-dressing, over-eating, over-drinking, over-spending, over-indulgence. Brighton beach in August is no beautiful sight, but it is the resort of those who have worked for their little escape, who have denied themselves and saved against this one bright-beaded fortnight of the year. They have a right to let themselves go, and their attitudes of negligence are not without charm. The coarseness of the poor puts shame upon the vulgarity of the rich, who destroy the beauty of the sea and interrupt the virgin wind, and make Brighton ugly with the ugliness of empty, unearned material success.

To the philosopher, it is a more painful study than Spitalfields or Hoxton or Cradley Heath, for joy comes to these places. But at Brighton there is only pleasure; and there is no sadder sight than that of the wealthy fool trying to buy pleasure in life. For him pleasure lives in glasses and on plates, in women and motors. He must have always a car and a group of "the boys," or a woman, and the crowded precincts of big hotels and restaurants. He has a certain greasy appreciation of the fat things in life, but no zest in them. His appetite needs the flick of the aperitif to urge it to its functions. The uneasiness of surfeit hangs about him. The high revelries of Hampstead Heath and Epping Forest, and the crash of cymbals in dark mountain heights, carry some note of animal ecstasy, some cry of the human feast; but this poor, parched phantom of frivolity, galvanised into a semblance of movement, arouses only disgust.

He does not cultivate the senses ; he indulges them. He is not a gourmet, but a glutton. He is not an amorist, but a buyer of skirts. The man of sense and imagination can break the conventions quietly—and often does—but the Brighton visitor does not make infidelity serious ; he only makes it mean. What his imagination cannot do, Brighton does for him. It shows him how to have what he calls "a good time" without any expenditure of taste, judgment, sense or manners. He need only spend the one thing he has—money. Brighton will do the rest.

But the Cockney Bohemian makes his own joys ; he does not buy them. Put him where you will - in a pub, in a ship, on the battle-field, in barracks, in a railway smash, in a fog, in a desert, in the suburbs, in church, in prison, in a mess - and there he will create Bohemia. At all times and places, and at all ages, he is the born Bohemian ; and, though grey hairs may ill become the fool and jester, your elder Cockney continues to the last to laugh sardonically at the world and at himself. There he stands, with his feet on Bohemian soil, a creature of fire and salt, grimacing disrespect at arid achievement, tickling us with his humours, and inviting us, vehemently, to share his stock of bananas.

He is to be found in many places, for he belongs to no compact section. He is in Islington and Westminster, in Stepney and Jermyn street, in Canning Town and Hoxton and Camden Town, and, if his accent and profanity are more harsh and fluent in Lavender Hill than in Piccadilly, the difference is only of degree ; for

Bohemianism is not matter of forms and fashions, of art or music or intellectualism. It is a state of mind. You have it—or not. Lord Leighton, who looked and dressed like a dignitary of the Church, had it. Augustus John, who looks and dresses like a comic-paper Bohemian, hasn't a touch of it. Which proves that Bohemia has nothing to do with art. So don't look for it in the student-world or in the intellectual cafés. The minds of their people are far, far above the real Bohemianism. Soho is as near as they get to it. And Soho is done.

There was a time when it was a foreign quarter, but to-day it is as much London as the Crystal Palace or Olympia. It has no lurking nooks; no inner circles. It was losing its character before the war, and now it has wholly lost it, and is become a mart. The film business hastened its destruction by taking over large blocks of buildings, and buying out little restaurants at fool-prices, and changing them into blaring business offices and stores reeking of Judea, chewing-gum and creosote. To-day, Wardour Street, once a street of amusing little cafés and curio-shops, is an avenue of film-offices. Instead of the discreet curtained window and the dish of dessert, you pass swaggering windows filled with life-size photographs of wide-mouthed mountebanks, pert, look-at-me schoolgirls, and middle-aged matrons trying to represent abandoned enchantresses. As for the cafés that still remain, they are, if possible, even more commercial in spirit than the film-offices.

Once upon a time Greek Street, Frith Street, Dean Street and Old Compton Street were happy

to serve the hard-up journalist, the small-part actor and the chorus girl. You could then ramble round its blithe by-ways, and carefully choose your café and make experiments. Every month or so a new place was opened ; sometimes to close down hurriedly, sometimes to rise, on the stepping-stone of itself, to higher things—to an elaborate menu and an untrustworthy wine-list. Then, each café had its patron and patrone. If you had dined there once, M'sieu' or Madame, at the door, had a smile and a bow for you the second time, and the third time the waiter remembered whether you took the fish or the omelette. They were pleased to see you, and departed you with graceful wishes "to the re-seeing."

Now, nobody wants you. You cannot wander round and drift in at choice. The thing has become regulated ; a function ; and tables are now booked. Tables booked—in Soho ! The soldiers on leave discovered Soho, and brought their women to it from Mutton-in-the-Marsh ; and business began to boom. Every dining-hour became a rush-hour. Proprietors and waiters had no words for new guests or old. If there was no table for the old guest he must go elsewhere. There was no arguing about it ; no tactful regrets or discussion. If you attempted enquiry you were likely to be sworn at in Basque. They were busy, and there was good money in the house ; a lot they cared about your regular patronage which had helped them when they were beginning. It is this floating but steady custom that has crushed the happy atmosphere of Soho. The patron no longer

regards his restaurant as a pleasant place, an achievement capping his long days of waiterhood, where he may sit and make friends with his customers, and congratulate them and himself on his kitchen. It is a business to be built up, so that he may get away from Soho, to Jermyn Street, and choose his clients from the best people.

Rudeness was wide-spread in England during the war, but in most quarters the armistice brought gentler manners. Soho alone maintains its war-time brusquerie and impatience. They don't care whether you come again or not. They have no interest in you as an individual—only as a customer to be fed and presented with a bill. You may not choose your table as of old ; they tell you to sit " there," usually at a table near the hot kitchen or by the door where the draught enters. A certain café in Old Compton Street even insists that two diners shall sit on the same side of the table, not opposite each other. To this rudeness they have now added incompetence. The service is slap-dash and the food poor. The hard-up journalist and chorus-lady wanted value for their shilling. They paid attention to what they ate and drank, for often it was the only meal of the day. But Soho knows that its present clientèle doesn't care.

" Dining in Soho " is the idea, and they eat the indifferent food, and drink the spirituous and expensive wines, and pay the excessive bill without a murmur. And, if they don't come again, Soho doesn't care. There are always others. Soho knows the truth of the old adage—" there's *one* born every minute."

Instead of the good value of the shilling lunch and the one-and-sixpenny dinner, we have the badly-served, carelessly-cooked dinner at three and four shillings; and, instead of the rough but decent "ordinaire," we have a high-priced wine list of grocer's red and white wines, doctored, and wearing false labels. For there is no law against describing vin ordinaire as Margaux, or sticking the label "Beaujolais" on an ordinary white wine.

Some day Soho will discover that this doesn't pay, and will try to get back to the old methods and prices. They may do that, but, alas, they will never recapture the old spirit. Once that is tampered with, it can never be adjusted. You may alter your ways, and repent, but if you tarnish the soul you can no more recapture its freshness than you can recover yesterday. And that's what Soho has done. It has laid itself out to attract corner-house custom, and it has succeeded. To dine there to-day is to dine among the suburbans who have come there to see the artists who no longer go there.

Fortunately for the modest and hard-up diner, for whom Providence always moves, as the old Soho went down another arose in its place, in the old German Quarter on the north side of Oxford Street. In that square made by Oxford Street, Tottenham Court Road, Newman Street and Tottenham Street, new cafés are arising at intervals, and old German cafés reappearing under Swiss management. Oh yes, and the lager is coming back, Pilsner and Munchner, and the long glasses and the thin German cigars, and the lidded beer mugs.

These places cherish the spirit of welcome and personal acquaintance with their customers.

My favourite is one of the older group, which I have named the "Fritto Misto." It makes no attempt at decoration or table display. Its note and its cuisine are bourgeois, and I find the rough table-cloths and the open pepper-cellars and the white metal forks an agreeable change after the overloaded tables of Soho. There you may get the exciting minestrone, which is a meal in itself; the perfect omelette, the elegant and aptly-grilled cutlet, ravioli, spaghetti, fritto misto, the brisk salad, and all the cheeses in the piquant moment of maturity. You get, too, fresh materials, good cooking, deft service, and the affable greeting on the threshold. And all at prices less than the prices of the flaring and sticky Corner Houses. There is no rush, no scurry, no crowd; no presentation of the bill the moment your coffee cup is empty. Dejeuner spreads itself as dejeuner should. Out of no ill-will to the proprietors, but for my own gratification, I hope it and the other cafés will never become popular, for then art and suburbia will descend upon them and ruin them. At present they are patronised mainly by elderly scholars from the Museum Reading Room and young students from Bloomsbury.

Bloomsbury is not Bohemia, but it has a happy tone. The fragrance of literature hangs about the very stones and trees of this region of squares. The poets and novelists of the past are represented by poets and novelists of to-day; and at the gates of the British Museum, and its

library of the past, stands modestly the less pretentious library of to-day of Mr. Mudie. Where the patrons of literature once held their levées, now a group of publishers—so much more useful than any patron—have their offices.

Bloomsbury was never, I think, so bad as it has been painted. Certainly it has had its ups and downs, but vicissitude is evidence of character. From a centre of the residences of what was once called the "nobility and gentry," it sank to letting cheap lodgings to an assorted crowd of workers and students—"the ignobly decent"—and characters ignoble without decency. Then, being at the gates of Euston, King's Cross, and St. Pancras, it enjoyed a period of prosperity by its quiet and not too cheap hotels, in whose lounges placid old ladies wielded crochet needles. Now it is again in favour as a residential quarter, and its hotels are rejuvenated. The decent houses of its squares are entering their second period, some as town houses, others as offices of dignified businesses or learned and charitable societies. Its dinge, melancholy, and resigned squalor, which did exist, though not so densely as the realists believed, are wholly gone. Belgravia has fallen down, but Bloomsbury has "come back." It is time for the novelist to correct Gissing and give us a Bloomsbury romance.

It is now as neat and trim as Mayfair, and its history is much more illustrious. The tall plane trees of Bedford Square are greener and more stately than the trees of Berkeley Square. The houses are fresh and carefully kept. The squares are pools of green light. It is preened

and polished ; bright with little hotels and gay with flower-boxes and green doors and shining knockers. Its straight deliberate streets are broken by the chatter and movement of the students ; and in the doorways of the hotels cool-frocked girls sit regarding the gentle confusion of its traffic.

A wondrous renascence has come particularly to Gower Street. In the early nineteenth century it was a select residential district ; but at the end of the nineteenth century it went into a decline, and its reputation became associated with that of Euston Road, of lodgings for the night and no questions asked. Its odour was rank. Then, suddenly, there came a change. It staggered up and recovered its self-respect ; and to-day it is an address of which the most circumspect need not be ashamed. In it are the homes of Sir Anthony Hope Hawkins and Lady Diana Duff Cooper. What a recovery ! And in its midst are the very tents of youth—the huts of the India and Ceylon branch of the Y.M.C.A., where graciously gowned Indian girls and tailor-made youths lounge or saunter ; University College ; and the magnificent hostels of two big drapery firms. The garret in Bloomsbury, and the starvation that must, by tradition, go with a garret, are legends of long yesterday. The young literary amateur from the provinces, coming to Bloomsbury, may banish from his memory the dim pages of " New Grub Street." He will not find it there. There still is a New Grub Street, but its inhabitants do not live in Bloomsbury or frequent the Museum Reading Room for their

work. The solid article, involving research, is little wanted to-day ; brighter stuff —brighter and shorter—is what is wanted; and this is the work that is done in New Grub Street ; this and advertisement-writing.

Bohemia must be sought elsewhere. It is not here, nor is it in Leicester Square or in that café so famous among the Universities. You will find many things there, but little that is amusing or stimulating. You will find there a certain deliberate schoolboy assumption of Bohemianism, but nothing more. For a man is no more consciously a Bohemian or a genius than he is consciously happy or consciously healthy. If you discovered your true Bohemian, and called him to his face a Bohemian, he would indignantly repudiate the suggestion. He would affirm his hatred of the unconventional and insist on his respectability, and call witnesses to prove it. It is your mediocrity, who, to escape public indifference, has to dress like a member of the chorus of "La Bohême." The gargoyle attitude to life, which is triumphant here, has little to do with Bohemia, and good Bohemians are not now to be found there. It has outlived tradition and ceased to function, and is now merely a show-place for tourists.

I would call it the most sluttish place in London. The ventilation is poor, and the evening air is thick with smoke and scent. The marble tables carry brown rings of coffee cups and spillings of beer. The waiters are slack and dispirited and none too well kept ; the effect, maybe, of a year's evenings among that company and that talk. The place suggests a slut in a

fine evening robe and dirty finger-nails. The latter is a distinguishing mark of much of the company.

Healthy animalism finds no expression here. Laughter is seldom heard, and the hilarious binge is frowned upon. No note of youthful folly arises ; no exuberance even in attack. All is considered and deliberate ; a spectacle of solemn young people trying to be "different," wearing the absurd trappings of Murger's country, which existed only at the point of his pen, and trying to invoke Russian awareness with thin drinks ; young men with pink socks and pink voices fumbling with the arts, and trying to forget that they came from Liverpool. Except for the presence of certain types of male and female, the place would be inexpressibly dull. But here and there may be seen queer creatures. There sits an hermaphroditic creature with side-whiskers and painted eyelashes, praising a soft-bearded youth for the exquisite mood values of his "Hymn to a Buzz-Saw." There are things in women's clothes that slide cunning eyes upon other women. Male dancers who walk like fugitives from the City of the Plain. Hard-featured ambassadors from Lesbos and Sodom. These, and the pseudo-intellectuals, make up an atmosphere cold and flaccid. If the occasion were an orgy of vice, it would at least have some interest as a pathological manifestation ; but it isn't. It is a thoroughly respectable affair, conforming to every point of the public code of order. The company has neither the quick leap of fresh youth nor the bold relish of the beast, but something between ;

something crawling and discreet ; something epicene. And it is worse because it is intellectually cultivated.

It is bad enough when it goes without brains, as among the painted boys and their ponces, to be seen in certain rendezvous in Edgware Road and behind Mayfair. You may know these places by the strong odour of scent when you enter them, and the absence of women. The sweet boys stand at the counter, or lounge, beautifully apparelled and groomed, in chairs, under the wandering eyes of middle-aged, grey-faced men. Towards these they ogle and simper. But most of them were born like that, and they are much less offensive than those who combine their paederasty with poesy.

Well, the Café of the Marvellous Boys isn't Bohemia. Neither art nor eccentricity, neither excess nor wit are necessary parts of the vagabond life. Bohemia lies everywhere about you, except in studios, for these are serious workshops ; you are as likely to find it there as behind the grille of the Bank of England. But you will find it in East India Dock Road, among the marine students ; in Smithfield and Bermondsey, among the mad medicals ; in South Kensington, among the science men ; in certain houses in Streatham and Tottenham and Ilford, where I have at times seen things that would make Vine Street sit up ; in Charing Cross Road and in Knightsbridge. The four-ale bar is Bohemia. The suburban monkeys' parade is Bohemia. Hampstead Heath at night is Bohemia. Upper Street, Islington, on Saturdays, is Bohemia. In every corner of the great bazaar of London the

ardent shopper of humanity will find the stalls loaded with bunches of Bohemian bananas, not to be bought or bargained for, but to be had for the taking. The good stout London air is the very smell of Bohemia.

A Frenchman, forgetful of his nation's chief quality, said that the smell of London was beer. He was wrong. It is a thick, aromatic smell, certainly, but it cannot be so easily named. Two things that you cannot describe are voices and smells ; and the smell of London defies all analysis or comparison. It is just London, and it is concentrated under the glass roofs of Euston, Marylebone, St. Pancras, Charing Cross and Paddington and Waterloo, to welcome the stranger, as the smell of Paris welcomes him at St. Lazare or Gare du Nord.

One often hears of those legendary country trippers to London who never leave the station of their arrival but spend their day there. Why should they go outside ? Under that roof they inhale essence of London ; and if they went outside, though they might, in their few hours, see more of London, they would get no keener sense of London than the station can supply. This station atmosphere works each way. It can give you as much of the spirit of the country and the provinces as the places themselves, and I have often indulged my mood of travel with a few hours at one or other of our termini. In my hard-up time I did a vast deal of travelling without trains. In none does the lust of travel burn more fiercely than in myself. I am a roamer, bold and gay — or would be if I had my way. But, in my penurious days, travel was not

possible, except, on occasion, by the kind assistance of the National Sunday League; so I deceived myself by a passionate counterfeit. When the desire came upon me to quit my Brixton lodging, and pitch my tent under the walls of Teheran or Kabul, I assuaged the passion by visiting Poplar and the Asiatics' Home. Never could I rest long in one place. A glimpse in passing of a shipping company's posters would set up a yearning for travel that was only gratified by moving to Camden Town. I have had homes in Clapham, Eltham, Balham, Bloomsbury, and Highgate. Oh, I've been about in my time, I tell you! I am like that great traveller who interrupted so frequently Irvin Cobb's descriptions of his European tour with corrections, promptings, and amplifications of his own, he having made the tour year by year. Finally, when Cobb's best description was interjected by a pointless correction, Cobb turned upon the cosmopolitan: "Oh, all right—you tell 'em about it, Gold-fish. You've been round the globe!"

When fares to English beauty-spots were cheap, I could not find the money. Now that they are expensive, I still cannot find the money. But I still travel. I keep Bradshaw and the ABC on my desk, and I plan meetings at Windermere, and book bedrooms at "The Feathers," Ludlow, and "The Lygon Arms," Broadway, and take the waters at Aix, and obey Mr. Thomas Cook by preparing to winter in Madeira. This, of course, is not my full programme: imagination, assisted by the printed

page, is not sufficient to transport me into the full air of these places, and lend me their smell. I must have material contact; the senses must be fed. And I feed them at the big stations. By seeing the Continental trains off at Charing Cross and Victoria, I am abroad. By taking a drink in a little bar in Drummond Street, adjoining Euston, I travel to the North-West and Scotland.

Hither come old matrons, with infinite baggage and strange accent and behaviour, who open each sentence with "Ey, dear"; and at these words I am in the horrid wastes of Lancashire, and the stinks that belong to it. I meet Scottish travellers from Perth, smelling of dye-works, and black melancholy Irishmen, booked for Holyhead. I overhear their plans for the journey. I share their anticipated discomforts and their troubles in the matter of sustenance, and sometimes I assist them by tipping the cheap sandwich shop round the corner. I learn from them what are the "hours of opening" in their corner of England. I learn that the tea at Punkton Junction is hog-wash, and that Preston serves a champion cup of coffee. In this bar the heathery air of Scotch hills, the crisp air of Yorkshire, and the soggy air of the Midlands are to be absorbed in fancy.

If my desire is Cornwall or Somerset, I take a bus to a little saloon in London Street, near Paddington, where I am sure to find good company in lounge suits cut from a good West of England cloth which they wear without grace. I meet Bill Brewer, Jan Stewer, old Uncle Tom Cobleigh and all, and they talk in sweet, rich

southern tones of the iniquities of London publicans who sell sweet stuff in bottles—yes, bottles —and call it cyder. And again I tramp over Exmoor, or lounge in the villages of Dorset ; or I may smell the dreadful smell of wet coal, which is the smell of the Rhondda Valley, for here are many high-voiced, high-strung lads from South Wales.

Only the other day I made a journey to Newcastle, via Peterboro', Lincoln, Doncaster, York and Durham ; for, in a restaurant anigh King's Cross, I came upon a group of rasp-voiced men, and was drawn into conversation. We fell to talking of their homeward journey, and, as the group included natives of each of those towns, I was able to revisit them. We talked of hotels, bars, local characters and local tradesmen ; whether the War Memorial had yet been unveiled in this city ; whether that horse-faced scoundrel was still on the magistrates' bench in that city ; whether the manager of the Empire at t'other place still wore evening dress and pink socks. I came away with a feeling that I was returning to town after many weeks of provincial touring, and filled with fresh joy in London and the million amenities of its streets, those streets that hold for each some sleeping beauty waiting only for our awakening touch ; the streets of Bohemia.

I know of but one club in London that truly is Bohemian in character and style. The so-called Bohemian Clubs are somewhat depressing with their solemn heavy furniture and their diligent boyishness. You cannot have a Bohemia with money and an etiquette or a

standard of things "done" and "not done"; but these places have a lengthy code of things forbidden; and if a true Bohemian happens to get into their company they are sorely perplexed. It is easier to shock your professional Bohemian than to shock a Y.M.C.A. meeting. They profess to accept life in all its nude manifestations; but show them an ugly corner of life and they are disturbed.

I once took, to a very advanced and rorty night-club, that thought it was a Hell Fire Club, a thorough rapscallion, whom I had picked up in St. Luke's; a lad who lived as he listed, without code or standard of values for anything in life; a bruiser, who had been as often in prison as in the ring; in short, a Bohemian; and I was asked not to bring him again. They hinted that my action was *in bad taste.* "Hang it all, you know, old man . . . I mean to *say* . . ."

I say I know but one Bohemian Club. It is a night-club, but it has none of the trappings of the West End night-club. To get to it, you turn from St. Bride Street up an alley, and turn down another alley, and a small door admits you into a large bare-floored room with bar and tables. It is the Newspaper Workers' Club, chiefly for the printing section, but also used by members of editorial staffs. The bar opens at eleven p.m., and remains open till four in the morning; and meals are served at all times. Better meals in value than any West End supper-club will give you; right nourishing meals at prices that astonish. Well, you can sup splendidly there for a shilling. Its

soup is as good as Mother makes, and its atmosphere is an atmosphere of mateyness and rich rude pleasantry. At about one in the morning it is most busy. Then troop in the men from the printing departments of the dailies, and things become amusing. The printer's vocabulary, by his calling, is extensive and apt, and his language makes even sergeant-majors feel inept and small. Stories float about, and snuff is taken. Downstairs are another bar and two billiard tables, and Ted (I'm not sure if it's still Ted) who commands affairs. The appointments are simple and rough, but this place has all that a club should have in social facilities and diversions. Many midnight hours have I spent there when all other doors were closed; and many an air-raid night passed Bohemianly in that basement with one of Ted's schooners before me, and Ted and a group of members round the billiards table or with the darts.

It has no motto, no "note," and its annual subscription is about the price of a Strand lunch. (Which reminds me that I haven't paid mine for over three years.) There you may do what you like, and be truly yourself, and let others be themselves; and if you are told, as I have been told, that if you can't—— well play —— billiards, why don't you —— well give up the —— table to those that —— well can, you will see the justice of the rebuke, and make way, and return flourish for flourish—all in the friendliest spirit. You are under no restraint whatever. Don't think that I am approving bad language or too-easy behaviour.

I am only thinking that we have enough restraint at every turn of our over-governed lives, and that a club should be the one place where restraint is eased and conduct given free play—for good or ill.

But, oh dear!—suppose you spoke your mind in plain terms at the Studio Club, in Regent Street (a very arty affair) or the Hambone Club, in Ham Yard, a futurist den, where impromptu concerts are supposed to beguile the midnight hours—I'm sure you would be asked to leave. But I don't think you'd lose much. Those concerts—they speak rather of local talent in the Corn Exchange. I prefer my little café near Great Queen Street, the Café of the Forlorn. It is really a working-men's eating-house, but other than working-men use it. You will find there no bright names, no "coming" men, or successful artists. It is the rendezvous of the Nobodies, and is happier and more stimulating than any gathering-place of the famous. It has no concerts, no "art" frescoes, no dancing, no ham-bones. But it has a warm, kindly atmosphere, and you may there have ripe talk with sound intelligences.

It is near Bruce House, the L.C.C. apartment-block; and to it come the impoverished scholars and poor gentlemen of letters from their municipal lodging. They are not regular customers; for they are the real Bohemians, for whom there are days when they must dine with the sparrows. But when there is a good time, and two or three of them are there, taking a cut from the joint and two veg, you

will be in rare company. Friendless and battered, they can produce among themselves more merriment and true delight than twenty studio clubs. Each is a character, and each maintains that character.

One famous and successful man is much like another. In the achieving of success or fame, men seem to shed something of personality and angles. In securing the bone, they lose the enduring shadow. They are stamped and marked like pieces of plate. But the failures remain themselves. They have quaint twists of character. They talk better and more freely than the famous. They have nothing to hide, and nothing to fear. They do not strive to flatter and placate you. They do not quail at giving offence if honesty compels it. Asking nothing of the world, they are, by general understanding, exempt from the world's petty observances and reticences. They will tell you the truth about themselves, or about yourself, without suppression or demur; and if you offer them money they accept it openly and casually, with a nod.

In that eating-house, or in the adjacent saloon, I have sat often among them, and heard great argument. Possessing abilities in large measure, they have no capacity for applying them. One is a poet, one an advertisement-writer (though seldom in work, being unreliable in delivery of copy), one a fiction-writer, and one a doctor of divinity. All are scholars and good talkers; and such talk passes between them that often old Jack, the owner of the eating-house, will lounge against one of the pews and listen to

them, interested and perplexed. He doesn't quite know what to make of them, but there is a nice distinction between his manner towards them and his manner to his reg'lars, the draymen and lorrymen. He recognises that they are "out of the ordinary." He asked me once who they were, and I said I thought they were journalists.

"Journalists—ah! I thought they must be *something*. I don't understand everything they talk about, but I could sit and listen to 'em for hours. That white-'aired one—the way 'e spouts—on and on—never at a loss for a word, like, is 'e?"

I first met them through the advertisement-writer. I had entered one evening Drury Lane tavern, and was studying the only other customer. He was a dim, seedy, smudgy fellow, looking the worse for the flotsam of decency that hung about him; and he intensified his rusty clothes, which were just not ragged, by drawing from his sleeve a spotless pocket-handkerchief. When he had used this and drained his tankard, looking deeply into it, and sighing, he looked at me and spoke:

"Prmm! As the poet says—"Go look into a pewter-pot to see the world as the world's not."

"Poet?" I said. Then my mind took a quick leap, and saved me. "Oh . . . yes—'Shropshire Lad.' Might I help you to see a little more of the world?"

"Why, you seem to be an intelligent young man. It would give me pleasure, sir, to drink with you at your charge."

I passed the appropriate compliment, and

gave an order. Then, leaving his untouched, he fell to discussing the state of the world to-day and its trend, with allusions to Carlyle, Matthew Arnold, Goethe, and Bergson. He filled a grimy clay pipe with assorted shreds of tobacco which he fished piecemeal from his coat-pocket, lit it, and, between puffs, jerked out reflective sentences on the Over-Soul. The four-ale bar was beginning to fill. The crowd mumbled of football and the spring-weights The barmaid simpered or snapped, varying her manner to the customer: and through the rumble my gentleman went steadily on. Emerson . . . St. Augustine . . . Rousseau . . . Voltaire. . . .

Then another wreck joined us. He had the face and figure of Edward Grieg, and was, I learned later, the poet who wrote rhymes for the facetious papers.

"Ah, Bilton. Any luck?"

The white hair shook.

"Nor here, either. Damn the lot of 'em—fat-faced troglodytes. I have just had the good luck of drinking with my young friend here—and that's all. And even with him I'm not very lucky. I try to stir him with Carlylean denunciations of the times and he says nothing. But I think, if you invited him, he would join you in a drink, at his expense. I tried it, and it came off."

That was the beginning of two amusing hours. Soon, others of their party came in, and with the arrival of each I was indicated as the host.

"I have had the good fortune, Davy, to make a friend of a young man with money. Come—let us spoil him."

It was a meeting of the Jolly Beggars—and was the beginning of a casual acquaintance which gave me much delight.

Here are the true Bohemians, living in the true Bohemia. They wear soiled linen, not for fun or for distinction, but because they cannot get clean. They are often unshaven, not from cult or negligence, but because shaves cost money. They would delight in a clean change every day, in Savile Row clothes, and goodly restaurants, and sound Burgundies and well-furnished homes, in place of their shabbiness, their eating-houses, their half-pint of stout, and their L.C.C. room. But, had they all these things, they would still be Bohemians. They have the right spirit.

It is among men like these that you will find that spirit ; and you will find it wherever you find the casual gathering ; at fairs, circuses, market-places, and ordinaries ; particularly at fairs. One by one these are being abolished, but, as one sport is suppressed or loses its spirit, the Cockney invents another. He has not yet, however, found a substitute for the fair. The fair of the old style, which was a market with amusements thrown in, is reappearing now in a truncated and very workaday form—the Trade Exhibition. Upon those floors where the glories of the *haute-école* were displayed ; where the Bearded Lady, the Japanese Wrestler, the Glass-Eating man, and the two-headed dwarf paraded ; where stood the Boxing Booth with the champion of Herzegovina, and the rifle-range, now stand regiments of placid automobiles guarded by placid and well-groomed agents. The Grocery Exhibition now takes the place of the Fasting

Man and the Living Mermaid ; and even that is degenerating ; it does not give samples so freely as it did. When there was no fair on, you could, as a lad, go to the Trade Exhibitions and collect samples. I remember one youth who went home from one exhibition with fourteen samples of Globe Polish, obtained by fourteen visits, at long intervals, to the Globe Polish stall.

Solemn affairs—these ; even the Electrical Exhibition cannot revive for one moment the spirit of Monte Cristo and Blondin and the one-handed conjurer and the thick crowd and the glitter ; the fine rage of trumpets and the clash of Bacchic cymbals ; the rush and parade of costume and colour ; the ecstasy of mixed movement, stately, laggard, slow, swift, furious ; and the whirl and wonder of it all and the beclouding smell of paint and sawdust. Will you believe that I came away from the Tobacco Exhibition without one mouldy sample, let alone a coco-nut ?

But I did better this year at Barnet Fair. I spent a full day there, with darts and quoits and roundabouts and happy scapegrace girls and boys, playing truant from work. All the old things were there and much of the old spirit. The delight of one's first theatre can never be recaptured, but last year's fair was fully as delightful as my first. It was one big party, and you picked up with anybody, and anybody picked up with you.

The sun blazed and the dust rose, and the orange-peel made a carpet ; and there were gingerbread and jellied eels and tripe and fried fish and yellow lemonade and clove-stick and

tea-and-water-creases and ice cream and home-made, or rather publicly-made, toffee, and pease pudding and chocolates and chip potatoes and Banbury cakes and——

"And was the Fat Lady there?"

"Yes, darling, and the man who eats broken glass."

"And the heavy-weight champion of Rutlandshire?"

"Yes, and the two-headed pigmy."

"And boat-swings?"

"Yes, and the sword-swallower, and——"

"And was there any roundabouts?"

"Oh, more than twenty roundabouts, my dear; motor-car roundabouts, aeroplane roundabouts, go-cart roundabouts, horse roundabouts, zebra roundabouts, dragon roundabouts——"

"And the Wild Man of the Woods?"

"Yes, and the Siamese Twins and the contortionist and——"

"And the clown?"

Yes, and the lady who rides four horses at once, and the thought-reader, and the tiger-lady with the striped skin, and the living mermaid, and coco-nut shies and darts, and houp-las and rifle ranges,rattlers and confetti and laughter and flushed faces and disordered ribbons. And every roundabout and side-show had its own organ braying out its own melody; and the whole afternoon was a chaos of music, a whirlwind of motion, a blizzard of light and colour, a maelstrom of odours, all stirred into one effervescent folly of festival.

And then "All clear out of the grounds!"

I came away with six coco-nuts, which I lost

on the way home ; a wrist-watch, which I gave away because two blue eyes coveted it ; a fountain pen, which wrote one line and then came to pieces in my hand ; and two pink-and-blue-and-green front-parlour vases, eighteen inches high. These I left on the doorstep of a hardware merchant at Whetstone.

But, if the Fair is doomed, the spirit survives. You will find it at the meetings of the East Ham Cage-Bird Society, and on the sharrabang. You will find it at the Annual Outing of the Barnsbury Licensed Victuallers' Association. You will find it at Alexandra Park, where, upon occasions, the huskies and rough-necks of the town gather around that corrugated asphalte called the Turf. You will find it at the dinners of the Ice Cream Retailers' Association. You will find it at the New Year Festival of the Dalston Dahlia and Chrysanthemum Society. You will find it at the dinners of the Antediluvian Order of Great Elks, of Druids and Buffaloes. You will find it in Upper St. Martin's Lane, outside Aldridge's, where the taxi-men join the horse-and-harness men over basins of stewed eels. You will find it at the monthly socials of the Street Traders' Brotherhood ; and you will find it in good measure at the in-aid-of meetings of any benevolent fraternity, where there is "roast" at one end of the table and "boiled" at the other, and where the canakin clinks, and good fellowship and hearty quarrels go hand in hand.

"Mister Chairman, I wish to report that the genelman on my right has used an offensive expression."

"Siddown! Siddown!"

"If 'e says it again, 'e'll get my tankard in 'is chops."

"Siddown! Lessave a song from Mis'r Burrows. Come on now, Mis'r Burrows!"

"I bin in the business forty years now, and 'ain't goin ter be told that——"

"Siddown, yeh fool. Somebody pull 'is coat-tails. Where's Mis'r Burrows? Come on now—*The Tarpaulin Jacket!*"

"'E ain't got no right to say——"

"Mis'r Gubbins—Will yeh SIDDOWN! We don't wancher. We want Mis'r Burrows!"

"Not 'til 'e takes it back!"

"Mis'r Chairman, I rise to 'pologise. I take it back. Oughter known better than dispute with a man old enough to be me farver."

"Old enough to be yer——"

"Nah, stop it, Mis'r Gubbins—you've 'ad yer 'pology."

"'E can stig 'is apology up——"

"Order! *Will* yeh shudd up?" Jus' 'ave a smoke together and fergit it. We come 'ere fer peace and quietness. Now, altogether, boys:

"There is a tavern in the town,
In the town!"

And Mr. Gubbins and his offender see each other home, in perfect amity, through the midnight alleys of Bohemia.

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